Woolf, Virginia

[Articles, essays, fiction, reviews]
v.4, June 1930

p.1-3, 19-27, 31-35 Reflections on being asked to write a life of Harriet Martineau. 2, 5, 3 p.

p.6-17, 28-29 [Common reader: second series. William] Hazlitt. 7, 2 p. dated Aug. 24 [1930]

p.37-59 [Common reader: second series] "I am Christina Rossetti. 12 p. dated Oct. 9, 1930

p.61-73 [The death of the moth. Evening over Sussex] 7 p

p.75-83 Incongruous memories. 5 p.
p.85-95 [The captain's death bed. Modern letters] 8 p.
p.97-113 [The death of the moth. Middlebrow] Three characters. 9 p Dated Dec. 11 [1930]
p.115] [Reviews. Dorothy Margaret Stuart's Christina Rossetti in the English men of letters series, 1930] 1 p.
p.117-133 [Death of the moth. Professions for women] Speech 21st Jan. 1931. 9 p.

p.135-149 [Captain's death bed] All about books. 7~~8~~ p.
p.151-153 Unidentified notes. 2 p.
p.155-165 Letter one. 6 p.
p.167-185 [Common reader: second series. Two parsons] Journal of a Somerset rector. 10 p. dated Feb. 21[1931]
p.187-239 [Common reader: second series] Aurora Leigh 26 p. dated Feb. 24 [1931]
p.241 [Common reader] George Eliot. k 1 p.

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Woolf, Va.
[Articles, etc]
v.4, 1930

Articles &c.

June 1930

"I am Christina Rossetti"
Evening over Sussex.
Impression Memoir
Letters
Three Characters
Letter all about Books
Another Parson
Aurora Leigh
George Eliot (post card.)

Reflections on Being asked to write a
Life of Harriet Martineau.

NYPL

June 13th

~~About the literary merit of~~

That these ~~papers~~ letters & fragments of autobiography will mean Convey to ~~readers~~ them who ~~we~~ ~~have~~ were not ~~never been~~ at that Congress ~~what~~ all that to ~~one~~ ~~who was there finds~~ in ~~them~~ they must mean to one who was there, ~~is~~ is ~~probably~~ not ~~unlikely~~ likely. & ~~Regarded as literature~~, & can supplement ~~their want~~ the written word with memories of face & speaker is perhaps ~~as~~ unlikely. ~~If one~~

~~Their~~ ~~As literature~~ they have many ~~limitations~~. limitations; & yet ~~If one reads them simply~~ As ~~literature~~ they ~~of~~ have many limitations: ~~are very obvious, &~~ at ~~the same time~~ the the writing lacks detachment & imaginative breadth & there no reflection; & no vision of life as a whole, & no attempt to enter into the minds of other people. They turn back to an earlier stage of Engl. letters & remind us of those obscure writers before Shakespeare who had never heard of Greece & Italy, but wrote merely to state ~~his~~ their own case as simply as possible. And yet since writing is an impure art, much infected by life, some qualities, perhaps are ~~as I think, are the both the~~ here ~~displayed which in other~~ there is an expressiveness in these pages a power of suggestion wh. ~~attains to~~ achieves the aim of writing however illiterately.

— Then the directness, the plain matter of fact

And I admit that I find Mrs Scott-

Then, here is a sentence

perfectly [illegible].

from Mrs Kidd

NYPL

in the difficulties which beset the lives of working women — in ~~what~~ in a letter ~~add~~ ~~which~~ addressed to you. For have not you & Lilian Harris given your lives — but hush! ~~That sentence~~ That is a sentence that you will not let me finish,

NYPL

Aug. 24th

Hazlitt.

The impression that they made on his youthful imagination was never effaced & scarcely overlaid; for after youth was over he ceased to read for pleasure. He seldom read a book through, & though he had to read, & had to write about what he read, the essay was written generally at the last moment, ~~&~~ ~~was~~ tossed to the printer & never looked at again.

His ~~marriage~~ ~~was~~ with Miss Sarah Stoddart did nothing to heal ~~his~~ these diversions & disabilities. Indeed, for soon life became a matter of compromise —

x Perhaps ~~those~~ it is the nature of these little pieces, which ~~hold the vibration &~~ are so close to the writer, & that they ~~should~~ need unity & a mind at ease with itself. A little jar there makes the whole composition tremble shiver.

& held the vibration of personality so much longer than the dramatic form,

A

x his criticism owes much to his love of painting; A book was a thing to be described with enthusiasm; shown as a to be built up again in other words; Rembrandt as for built up a picture by Vandyck or Rembrandt; but he says He ~~is a~~ He never says anything final; ~~so~~ ~~that~~ a great deal that is ~~suggestive~~, ~~striking~~, ~~startling~~; ~~but~~ He — that is original; that ~~starts the~~ ~~he~~ ~~makes~~ the ~~gives~~ us a ~~stimulating~~ place; settles He starts us off; ~~he~~ rather than soothes us down. We ~~get the~~ From him we gain impetus & appetite from reading him, ~~&~~ & want to range about the shelves for ourselves, ~~amusing~~ finding our way though ~~the book~~ And yet, ~~so~~ fine is his ~~mind~~, so ~~so~~ fine is his mind — that this rendering his mind is much too fine to ~~as the~~ that his ~~conclusion~~

energetic, & splendid partialities

Uncle books for ourselves, rest urged on by his effects

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Let him glut ~~a~~
keeps him always within touch of his object. His

often, as in the famous essay on Scott, the ~~two~~ analysis & enthusiasm go hand in hand & together produce a ~~reasoned~~ criticism which is at once enthusiastic & judged & enthusiastic, ~~etc~~ glows ~~to~~ ~~to~~
full ~~of colour~~

But perhaps the comparison is misleading.

Then it is easy to see why Hazlitt often fails, why, for all our admiration, it often needs an effort to keep the mind on ~~the page~~. on the page. ~~It~~ Compared with the other great masters in this line he has seen very little of the world.

But perhaps the comparison is misleading. Hazlitt's essays are ~~after all~~ after often not so much essays, not little independent worlds governed by a law of ~~expression~~ their own, aloof from the real world ~~but~~ ~~comments~~ ~~the comment of a powerful &~~ they are ~~com.~~ often fragments ~~of~~ ~~of~~ broken off from some unwritten philosophy. He loves to grope among the curious depths of human psychology & seek out the reasons for things. He excels in hunting down the obscure cause that lies behind some common saying or sensation. & the drawers of his mind are well stocked with illustrations & arguments. Had he been ~~among the~~ a novelist he would have been among the analysts & psychologists & not among the story tellers. ~~His~~ ~~frequent~~.
No possible place in any of Lamb's essays could be found for a sentence that is frequently to be

NYPL

met with in Hazlitt. "I will here try to go more at large into the subject & to give such instances & illustrations of it as occur to me!" What fits in perfectly with his. For twenty years, as he wrote, he had thought hard & suffered acutely. Convictions were his life blood; ideas were natural to him. ~~What he sitting in his corner~~ They have formed in him perhaps too soon, perhaps too hardly; but they exist ~~but with a clarity~~, a ~~free subtlety that make them~~ always hard, & real, & complex & capable of dissertation. then

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But besides Hazlitt the Essayist there is Hazlitt the critic.
In one way or another, either as lecturer or reviewer,
Hazlitt waded ~~[illegible]~~ through the greater part of English
literature & ~~left behind him an~~ reported his opinion
upon ~~most authors of~~ the majority of famous books.
His criticism has the rapidity & the daring, if also the
looseness & the roughness which ~~come from the~~
~~h method~~ of their arise from the circumstance.
He must cover a great deal of ground & has time only to
point to the ~~most~~ highest & ~~most~~ conspicuous landmarks. But
even in his most perfunctory criticism of books
we feel that faculty for seizing on the important &
~~indical~~ indicating the ~~a~~ main outline which
learned critics often lose & timid critics never
acquire. He is one of those rare critics
who have thought so much that they can dispense with reading.
It matters very little that Hazlitt had read only one
poem by Donne; that he found Shakespeare's sonnets
unintelligible; that he never read a book through after
he was thirty; that he came indeed to dislike
reading altogether — What he had read he had read
with fervour. ~~Hence~~ And ~~his view of a critic's duties~~
~~Sprang from his own~~ ~~such fervo~~ fervour was
~~essential to the for his~~ in his view the prime
qualification, since it was the duty of a
critic, he said, to "reflect the colours, the light &
shades, the soul & body of a work" —
~~zest~~ & appetite, gusto, enjoyment were far more
important than the ~~delibera~~ [illegible] the analytic power, which
~~sifts & compares or than~~ or prolonged & extensive

TT.
2 60.

NYPL

study. He ~~do~~ ~~aimed at~~ built up ~~in~~ with the present use of colour & imagery the ~~body~~ image that the book had left on his mind; he re-created the poem in glowing phrases — "A rich distilled perfume emanates from it like the breath of genius; a golden cloud envelopes it; a honeyed paste of poetic diction encrusts it, like the candied coat of the auricula" —
But since the analyst in Hazlitt was never lulled asleep by the most ~~flowing~~ fervid of his phrases, ~~there~~ ~~this brilliance~~ ~~then to sed~~ this painter's imagery, (& pictures were always at the back of ~~Hazlitt's~~ his mind) is supported, in his best criticism, by a ~~that~~ a framework of ~~logical~~ reason, by ~~a set~~ a ~~sense of the~~ muscular & set penetrating sense ~~of what the book~~ is ~~means in relation to other books~~ of the nerves & ~~mind~~ muscles of literature. There is nothing weak nothing flabby nothing merely ornamental —
Exclamatory in his criticism of Scott, or to instance of held erect by reason: And of
Enthusiasm seems ~~has~~ is justified.
Such criticism is the reverse of banal — it is initiatory, ~~unsparing~~ & inspiring rather than controlling &. There is something to be said for a critic who starts a reader, ~~rather than~~ on a journey of ~~his own rather than lands~~ his & urges him on, with stirring random, perhaps exaggerated, probably undocumented ~~information~~ inspiration to ~~read~~ for ~~himself~~. Finish the hasty sentences for himself.

~~Probably however.~~ ~~Yet~~ But if we want to ~~guess~~ Hazlitt is not going to survive because of his criticism; nor for his Conversations with Northcote — admirable though that is — nor for his travels in France & Italy nor for his Life of Bonaparte. ~~Hazlitt is going to~~ He dwells & with

far behind the surface

a running commentary: a ~~Φ~~ framework of reason & logic: of what left in point ... nervous sense of what a book stands for, & where it should be placed, what gives the enthusiasm modelling & outline: models his enthusiasm & gives it firmness, outline

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What better introduction to Burke & incentive to reading him Cd. there be than Hazlitt's p

What ~~an~~ better incentive to read Burke ~~[illegible]~~ for gaudy Cd. there be than in the phrase one can imagine ~~to~~ for example ~~looking at Burke with~~ & ~~[illegible]~~ going straight to Burke for no other reason ~~than that Hazlitt said~~ "Burke's style is was forked & playful as the lightning crested like the serpent!"..?

But it is likely that Hazlitt will survive ~~not for his~~ ~~in a few essays~~, not in his lectures, nor in his Travels through France & Italy, nor in his Life of Buonaparte, nor in his Conversations of ~~Mr~~ Northcote, ~~delight~~ admirable though that is: [He dwells in a few essays, ~~the dwelling~~, his essence; when ~~the~~ pages which are saturated with his being, not ~~merely streaked with~~ ~~are fitfully & capriciously~~ ~~con~~ ~~in to~~ ~~He comes to himself, & is~~ Here A ~~great deal of writing is often~~ ~~in~~ which the ~~genius, the essence, what is~~ which hold the essence]

Such as they are.

~~They seek to be~~ being read because they are so ~~of~~ their energy! their integrity, & ~~because they hold so much vigour, so many~~ their broken & fitful splendour will ~~attract, but chal~~ will always attract explorers, & ~~will often suffer~~ reward them, ~~if only with the~~ if at at the same time they are tantalised by hunger & alive the unlimited work, the great book that seems to hover above the adumbrated & ~~as~~ cheated of complete existence. ~~But of the great book was never written, those~~

The great books may not be the biggest; but those few pages in wh.

He dwells in a few essays, a volume extracted from these many volumes, in a ~~few~~ with which all his diverse qualities have soaked ~~& come together~~. In order to reach this consummation, it ~~would~~ there he seems to be himself, free from irritation, free from the strain & the torment & the anxiety.

NYPL

the jealousy which so often goaded him & put him out of temper. Perhaps a fine day was necessary, or a game of fives, or a long walk, alone. ~~Then his~~ A mood of intense & spontaneous reverie came over him. His mind was tuned to a pitch where it worked smoothly & swiftly & without consciousness of its own operation. ~~Shut up te~~ A ~~that was jotted rapidly & without exaggeration.~~ geniality pervades him - he seems at peace with all the world. He is friends with the coachman & with the old man in the corner. He is rid of sulkiness & jealousy.

~~Then~~. Body & brain then know no division. ~~Footman might laugh & chambermaid giggle~~ his There is then no discord between the thinker & the critic. The different faculties of the body & mind are play into each other - we ~~passing too freely~~ from the ~~heights~~ of & ~~rather~~ that love & poetry or a ~~fine~~ claret fine - all together - a partridge for dinner - it matters not - all together. "The same clear light, the same fresh pulse." very tempers & mutes have their relish

~~all this~~ Sentence follows sentence with the healthy ring & chime of a blacksmith's hammer on the anvil; the words flow as the sparks fly; swiftly they fade & the energy is over - And as his works had passages of unpremeditated description, so his life had its seasons of sublime enjoyment. When he lay dying a hundred years ago, in a lodging in Soho, his voice rang out with the old pugnacity & conviction - "Well, I have had a happy life..."

Something of the spirit of good fellowship & genial intercourse, or the spirit which ranges over the world

in ch. prose. how I [illegible] & [illegible] are all peopled with same [illegible] Leaves [illegible] [illegible]

NYPL

Reflections on Being asked to write a life of Harriet Martineau.

In the opinion of Mr Thos. Martin, of Martin & Daybright, U.S.A. the well known publisher, ~~of Wisconsin~~ Louisville, Mass: New York City, "~~nobody~~ ~~could~~ the time has come for a ~~complete~~ study, in modern terms, of the life of Harriet Martineau." And ~~nobody~~ the work, which shd. not exceed 80, or 90,000 words, would be well remunerated. And, should be published next Fall. And Thos. Martin feels certain that there is nobody ~~better~~ better fitted to sum up & present to modern readers. ~~a portrait~~ of ~~this~~ &c &c &c." And Thos. ~~had~~ sent under a separate cover a copy of Harriet's autobiography, (~~in case~~ ~~the work shd.~~ be for your perusal". The familiar & abbreviated style of these observations must be attributed, mainly, to the heat. The American mail had arrived on an afternoon of more than tropical splendour; ~~those blue~~ the envelopes lay, & the brown paper parcel too, on the grass wh. was steaming wet + the [illegible] under the apple trees; ~~while~~ for ~~after~~ a[illegible] ~~Now~~ now ~~very~~ pleasant to ~~see~~ sit out & ~~look at the hills through grains of lilac & amber & blue dust across the green & gold, & amber & lilac colour of the melt the resinous air & watch the sun making a hot bed for flowers in the~~ ~~sunny~~ ~~sky.~~ Under such circumstances it seems legitimate to talk of Thos. & Harriet.

reading letters ~~under~~ out of doors on a[illegible] holiday

it was just cool enough to sit out in the ~~under the~~ ~~apple tree~~; orchard,

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Harriet, on the 5th Septem 1930, certainly seemed rather
remote. Two aeroplanes were performing evolutions
overhead, & ~~[illegible] at once~~ one knew without looking at the
books that Harriet never saw an aeroplane.
~~One knew~~ How many people, within a radius of twenty
~~forty~~ miles, one asked, ~~know of the~~ had heard her name?
Twenty eight miles alas, are ~~is~~ bound to include a town of
some magnitude.— ~~And~~, & in a town of 50,000 (it may be)
inhabitants there are three elderly gentlemen &
two spinsters ~~who~~ having ~~[illegible] the~~ some inte
~~very [illegible] of [illegible]~~ & of some culture, of
rather invalidish habits, ~~given to reading~~ — indeed
one of them may have inherited a small library, &
from her uncle ~~who was~~ a clergyman — who also
knew ~~[illegible]~~ last that Harriet existed; & by
rubbing their memories, can think ~~it~~ they
remember that she wrote ~~something~~ either about
politics, or economics, or hypnotism or a novel, or Anything
~~Harriet Martineau did~~. There was a woman
~~called~~ called Harriet Martineau — that they are certain —
~~rather some time in the~~ But the world
is getting on very well without Harriet it seems:
the aeroplanes were ~~are~~ wheeling round again; the
swallows, & martins were ~~are~~ gathering obviously
considering Africa, & bringing themselves like a
younger family as they skims & skirmish, into
preparations for travel; & ~~stack~~ corn
stack was rising, palpably, in the middle distance,
under the incessant labour of that small
indefatigable man. Why seek to
revive Harriet? ~~Why~~ ~~what~~ What makes
Mrs. think that the time is ripe for a biography in

it is
possible
to suppose

[illegible] tho'
they cannot
be sure
[illegible] [illegible]

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the modern style' of that poor old mummy – that forgotten ghost-
that thin, ~~dark~~ negative; dustcoloured, eyeless,
phantom who flits occasionally like the shadow of a
bat across the vision of ~~a~~ only five people in the
whole of Brighton; & ~~the~~ Look – she lived even
before the age of photography: she is one of those
~~other~~ people – & they constitute a [illegible] –
who are known to us solely by two ~~[illegible]~~
~~tinted~~ portraits, ~~done with~~ pastels on yellow paper, by
George Richmond. Of all later, to be known by the
pastels of George Richmond is surely the hardest.
One would rather be shown grotesque in the style of the
Elizabethans, flowered in the style of Lely, gracious in
the style of Sir Joshua, or animated, authentic &
Elliott & Fry than be preserved, for all the
world like some faded fish in spirits of wine, in
the pastels of George Richmond. ~~Moreover~~, ~~his~~
~~people~~ And very unsympathetic Harriet looks!
Held up against the ~~leaves & the~~ golden leaves & the red
almost ~~tremulous~~ trembly blue of the sky she
appears ~~hot~~, solid, virtuous. full of moral
indignation, full of disagreeable home truths, &
common sense, & right mindedness; & energies;
Her hair loops down on either side of her broad & lofty
brow. Her lips are compressed. Mercifully we are
unable to hear the forcible & no doubt well
merited remarks that she is about to let fall.
They will be unpleasant, but so full of sense
that one will not be able to ignore them.
She does not believe, obviously, that sitting
under an apple tree is the right way to spend

& an unfortunate class

Chalk

NYPL

over time. Time has a value. ~~The he~~ Also, it is a well
known fact that the temperature in a well shaded room
if the blinds are kept drawn, is 10 degrees lower
than the temperature in an orchard. ~~The passes above~~
Yet, Harriet, Thos. Wilson ~~believes~~ that
has delivered you up: ~~Thos.~~ he thinks that
the time has come to make a study of you in the
modern style. & ~~Th~~ adds is ready to pay ~~me a~~ very
handsome sum ~~for for doing it~~. also has the kindness to
nobody is better fitted to . . .
say. here are his very words "
dress up & present to modern readers
words which are only too generously ~~suppose~~ that
that ~~a a~~ their representative (for so she) then wanted,
this ~~living but~~ larger & ungenerous & longing to
limp & careless &
altogether ~~[illegible]~~ sympathetic representative (~~for~~ so
are like
her portrait by G. Richmond ~~dialogue~~ ~~Dickens~~ Donovan are
is the ~~very~~ person to do it. But rest in peace. Harriet.
~~I am only going to~~ Nothing is more unlikely
shut with the aeroplanes & the hurry of the
harvest, & the swifts & the marker Regents
travel & adventure of sons that set, & peace
stealing over the stubble, & the white moon rising
& owls floating from Elm to barn, & nothing is
the bell tolling through the even mist — Emmy —
~~myself supplied by their representing~~ with a
more unlikely — the predict of Regent
than that any ~~living being~~ will
~~really~~ ~~Offer of~~ a one will write 80 or 90 Life
odd words about Harriet. Madame in
in Sept. 1930, is sweet. Life Harriet
is warm. The little gust of chill that comes
stealing through the branches is blue & . . .

in
far
land,

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What fun life
maybe!

altogether the very opposite of going to the British Museum & momentary reading: day after day, week after week, to in Deerbrook, in Forest & Game Law Tales, in The Hampdens, in Hist. of Eng. During the Thirty Years Peace, in Household Education, in How to Observe: Morals & Manners, in Illustrations of Polit. Economy, in Letters fr. Ireland, Letters on Mesmerism, Life in the Sick Room, Poor Laws & Paupers Illustrated, "Suggestions towards the future Govt. of India" — There ~~are round & about 52 volumes of Harriet.~~

52

There are round & about 52 volumes under the name of Harriet Martineau — Hattie would need help to shear the corn, & moved it into that great yellow cake, which is beginning to rise in the corner of the field. the rest silent

Writing one a week, a year of Italy.

~~But~~ Anyhow how melancholy is the power of the dead!

It was ~~the~~ a vibration from Harriet truly, the thin of her energy, that ~~sound~~ the beat of her hot heart, that made one half see in one's chair as if to go down to the field, in the sun, & take a pitchfork — The woman must have worked like a slave.

What has that got to do
with culture. Must be asked
to write Carlyle's a job?

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That of Form is not culture: this
Mind style is not to culture a habit: this
That is one way of
reading

Then [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]

& form being with half a phrase to finish it for himself. None needs on

Or again that- one be trembling on the brink of a death

Julia at ~~that on~~ the unhelpers of the following passage —
~~is enough~~ ~~proud~~ to plunges are quite midstream —

~~one almost forgets Hazlitt's~~ own suggestion not to
~~when in sun~~ of sudden passion & calm
In reading such passages, ~~where some sudden~~ ~~a flash of passion bred suddenly~~
~~passion seems to take place~~ fused. temperance; & the whole page blazed
becomes luminous, one almost forgets Hazlitt's
~~caustic~~ suspicion

Such passages with their sudden luminosity,
~~Illuminated~~ & ease & sense of fusion
~~Hazlitt's own~~
~~make one almost~~
~~wary~~ —
~~are constantly~~

with its sudden

~~The passage is characteristic of Hazlitt: his mind seems to fuse:~~ ~~the~~

like a sudden light

Sudden, lambent

The sudden luminosity of the phrase,
~~is very~~ coming; like a sudden light. in a
a ~~flat~~ ~~passage~~ which with its softness &
ease ~~is very~~ & And the passage is
very characteristic of Hazlitt's: who is
extraordinary Hazlitt may hardly
such a ~~phrase~~ passage; altogether his
hard muscular mind fuses in such
cambering & ease &.

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~~The woman~~ To ~~who~~ write those fifty two volumes between the
years 1804 & 1875 — must have got up early & gone to
bed late; must have known how to lock her door; how
to square her family; how to disregard the
disapproval, & the astonishment admiration of mid-Victorian society.
Here a ~~huge~~ little puff of air, straying through the grass,
began shuffling the leaves of Mrs. Wilson's copy of
the opening & shutting, ~~so that the largest an~~
so that without violating the tea peace of the September
every one might ~~peep &~~ pick up here & there a few
facts — might sketchily, & directed by the hand of
chance, consider ~~the~~ Editing it in the most
casual way, so that without violating the peace
of the September evening one might peep & peer —
pick up a fact or two upon which to base
those dreams in which the dead appear before us.
Yes, Harriet had an old mother & an old Aunt; & when
Harriet, in order to write those Economic stories
moved to rooms in London '~~that~~ my two old ladies'
~~moved~~ came after her, & well nigh made her life
intolerable. It was all very natural. Mrs
Martineau was fond of power; & when visitors
came to see her daughter when her daughter was so
famous that everyone in London was coming to see her
& sending carriages to fetch her to see them, Mrs
Martineau was jealous in the extreme.
A jealous mother, in a small house, in 1830 could make
living extremely unpleasant.
London in those days was a little town, very hot in
summer, very malodorous, extremely select. Men being

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wd. put a lighter in the hall when the expected company.
So much was it that the advent of a deaf ~~lady~~ — see,
her hand in her to her ear in that pantechnicon — :
~~lady~~, economist from Liverpool, a plain woman
past her youth, ~~was an event~~ excited enormous
interest. She was set at a table in the middle of the
room when she dined out to be stared at — or
~~much~~ wd. have been ~~her fate~~, had she not taken the
law into her own hands & hidden in a vase behind a
door. The breeze ruffles page after page.
But wherever one glances, the story seems the same. She is
working all day to get through her papers; the printer's
devil is often in the hall; the house is all hanging on
Harriet her — will she finish, will she be done in time!
~~But~~ Certainly, to be an authoress in those days of
peril was a nerve-harassing experience. She had
always to prove that she was ~~de~~ adept at the
feminine arts into the bargain. And the attention
she excited was intense. And she always overworked
And consequently she quarrelled. Reviewers —
Lockhart in this instance — were violent & brutal.
The authoress always had to say she did not
mind, & then to go into the question — happily
the breeze became livelier & turned over
in a hurry.
flock of pages all about quarrels
But what then was the central motive of this
tremendous ebullition? People never work —
work & agonise to this extent — 3 large volumes.
without having hidden, some central
object, we may take the 52 volumes for granted;
their leaves fertilise our soil. But we cannot
take for granted the spirit that inspires 52 volumes

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why, on a hot evening like this, it is all about us seems as if the one thing needful.
was our ways, our systems, were that so many people
have cherished in them ~~a core of heat~~; one sees it and
hugs the swallows & swifts. Even the Church bell which
rings, at the command: & the aeroplanes, wh. Harris
never saw — but they were also the visible product of
some mid-Victorian energy. Well — here is a
sketch; "I write not for money nor for fame; but because I
had to": Even then the minds. the whole of the
plain revolution. [illegible] [illegible] shows that;

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9th Oct 1930.

"I am Christina Rossetti"

~~Some Notes on Christina Rossetti~~.

On the fifth of December, Christina Rossetti will celebrate her centenary, or, ~~for that is the last thing that Christina would have been likely to do~~ rather ~~to~~ do. We shall celebrate it for her; ~~which~~ in her despite, & not a little perhaps to her disgust & ~~detriment~~. Poets, she might have said, for prose writers ~~such~~ celebrations are all very well: ~~but~~ ~~we shall~~ we shall read her life — we shall read her letters; we shall study her portraits; we shall scavenge about among the odds & ends of ~~[illegible]~~ ~~that~~ of memoirs, ~~&~~ that remain; compare what some said with what [illegible] speculatively, ~~we are after~~, [illegible] ~~as~~ ~~upon~~ the ~~character~~ of Mr. Swinburne said, & ~~[illegible]~~ Collinson & Mr. Cayley. Nothing could be more amusing. ~~Instantly~~ Directly, ~~as~~ we read ~~Miss~~ the careful & competent biography: ~~already issued~~ twenty years ago by Miss Mary F. Sandars, Christina becomes ~~as~~ a fascinating ~~figure~~, ~~study~~ figure; & we turn page after page, far ~~more~~ easily ~~than we~~ re-constructing, than turn ~~the~~ pages of any novel, ~~[illegible]~~; display is here a curious mid-Victorian life; ~~with~~ [illegible] it develops under our ~~gets~~ the quality & that; watching it ~~surrounding it with its curious circle of~~ ~~to mar~~; to complete it, ~~many~~ London streets & dark rooms, horse omnibuses & John Polidori; & Mr. ~~Art.~~ the a ~~wombats & toads~~; & many odd great poverty; & ~~profound~~ religion; & many odd ~~characters~~, & & then, setting in motion these few, but extremely characteristic ~~figures~~ people by whom

in the course of celebrating her century

The charm is irresistible. Read the. ~~the character of~~

hand

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this so limited & circumscribed system: tracing the lines of this very resolute dignified ~~habit; & the~~ character, which ~~even~~ ~~as we~~ ~~read~~ not only ~~lives~~ so takes its way so steadfastly from Albany St ~~to~~ to Torrington Square; ~~but~~ ~~to~~ sits sewing & reading: sits writing in a clear & hand very carefully; but draws round it, out of the darkness, ~~than~~ a very few, but very remarkable figures. ~~What can be more absorbing?~~ The The stately mother, the brilliant Gabriel, the ~~sincere~~ unselfish William; Maria Francesca whose religion was so stern & ~~so liberal~~ that she refused to visit the Mummy Rooms at the British Museum ~~lest~~ in case the day of Resurrection might dawn ~~as she was~~ & the corpses be ~~looking at the corpses, in which case~~ ~~forced to put~~ on immortality ~~under the gaze of casual~~ ~~vulgar sears.~~ in ~~their glass cases~~ under the gaze of casual sightseers. ~~To Christina there was nothing.~~ ~~Nothing can exceed the fascination of this~~ ~~Has indeed,~~ ~~in a few lines, as we to pass any sense of the~~ ~~many~~ This ~~ridiculous~~, disjointed with only a few lines at one's disposal, to attempt any summary; ~~of all this~~ & yet, how they come, tempting & teasing-making us exclaim that we Perhaps it is a belief in that a character is like a ball of string & that if one can find the dangling end & pull it smoothly the whole ball ~~can be~~ will unwind, that anecdote would ~~serve~~ ~~provide the~~ be the one to tug. ~~At least it would~~ ~~Let us make the attempt~~. ~~be easy~~ Incontinently to continue & say that since Christina ~~admired her sister, & saw~~ nothing funny, ~~she was~~ She in that day she was almost excessively devout. She was

one figure & then another, not many, but all singular, all character

She admired sisterhood.

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marked by

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It would lead us at any rate straight to the heart of
Christina's main pre-occupation — her religious fervour, her
mysterious & passionate & lifelong absorption in the
Uull ~~life~~ of the soul after death: How many of her sixty four
years were spent, not in Torrington Square, but in
some curious region, where the mind does battle
with an unseen God — a cruel, a harsh God — a
God who decrees that all the pleasures of life are
hateful to him — The theatre is hateful to him:
nakedness is hateful (when Miss Thompson introduced
naked figures into her pictures, she (fibbing) told Christina they
were fairies' but Christina saw through their
imposture): a God who lends us gives life ~~only as condition~~
~~that~~ as ~~a probation~~ in order that we may trample it
under foot, & so come to live some better life in his presence.
~~Many hours~~ ~~The Case of~~ It is extremely difficult to
get within range of this state of mind: to feel & yet
write of Christina's life, & not to understand it, would be
like ~~writing of a~~ how she must have spent the greater
part of it: to write of Dante & leave out the Inferno: to
describe a landscape & leave out the colour.
Everything ~~the~~ in Christina's life radiates from that
dark spot, that intensity, that agony. That & certainty
Centre of ~~whirlpool~~ in the Centre. ~~And~~
Even the ~~most~~ secular minded trafficker through the
strange ~~seas of biography~~ ~~must~~ For
One had to be, according to Christina, a
And nothing is more ~~curious, to those~~
And what makes the state of mind more unintelligible
is that it was so explicit ~~The~~ Certain
Clergymen. The Church of England was right; & the

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Church of Rome was wrong. And ~~what further complicates~~ the
of that Christina was positive. ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ Whatever the
However we may regret her person – ~~Admirable & intoler-~~
~~able her~~ reasons, certain her despair her rapture ~~are~~ were
strictly circumscribed. A line ran round them. The
truth was contained in one book, in one church. When
Charles Collinson became a Roman Catholic, Christina
refused him; when he became a member of the Church of
England she accepted him; when – for he was a slithery
man – he ~~returned~~ wobbled back to Rome, she finally left him &
broke her heart. ~~With~~ The same story was repeated
15 years later with Charles Cayley. This abstract & erudite
man, who shuffled about the world in a state of
deshabille, translating the gospel into Iroquois; &
asking smart ladies at a party"
& whether they were interested in the Gulf Stream?"
& presenting Christina with a sea-mouse
preserved in spirits, was not unnaturally, a sceptic.
She them too, Christina hurt from her. She cd. never
marry him: she cd. condemn him only to see him
from time to time at the house of friends;
though no woman ever loved a man more
deeply" Did she not call him "my
blindest buzzard, my special mole"?
Yet though he was as a pair with wombats: &
moles, toads & all the ~~huge~~, lovable &
sporting things with which her fantastic
hungry heart revelled, he was an outsider: there
was no place for the wombat in Christina's
heaven.

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~~Such are the lures with which the~~

~~Nothing would be easier than to~~ Once more we will ~~allow ourselves to dip into~~ the Rossettis.

And Once more we will dip into the great bran pie ~~which~~ of the past & then we will ~~that the~~ have done.

in which the next blooms & flourish

~~Mrs Virtue Tebbs gave a party~~. Christina ~~hated parties~~ & was extremely shy, never had the right clothes, dressed unbecomingly & hated parties. But once she went to a party given by Mrs. Virtue Tebbs. And there for some unexplained reason a strange thing happened. ". . . . Suddenly there uprose from a chair & paced forward into the centre of the room a little woman dressed in black who announced solemnly, 'I am Christina Rossetti!' & having so said returned to her chair."

For us whatever the reason of her action, it serves somehow to rebuke us. "I am Christina Rossetti" she seems to say. "~~I am a poet. I am~~ I am a poet. ~~I am~~ ~~And~~ Yet you, who pretend to celebrate my centenary, Go rambling among these unimportant trifles, raking about among turnable, scavenging in rubbish heaps. All of me that I care for you to know is here. My collected works cost four shillings & sixpence. Why not read them: ~~they are the only tribute I care to accept~~. read this ~~have.~~ ~~in~~ page ~~you will read~~, " & she returns to her chair.

And ~~the ghost points to page~~ . . . .

And as it happens the book opens at page 331 & we read.

Dumb I was when the rain fell,
Dumb I remain & will never tell;
O my soul, I talk with thee,
But not another the sight must see."

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How absolutely unaccommodating these poets are! Read ~~their~~ my poetry; they say: but they ~~cannot~~ do not bother about explicit: do not tell us how. ~~Yet~~ And undoubtedly there is some reason to think that if a person has spent the better part of sixty four years in ~~read~~ writing poems, it is irrelevant, when the time comes to celebrate their centenary, to talk of mesmerism & wombats & Hallam Street & armadillos, & Italian refugees & James Collinson & Charles Cayley & the parties & sea mews & other ~~such endearing trifles~~ oddities. For though ~~a prose writer~~ one must read their poetry; one must say her ~~poetry is good poetry & dare write~~ whether it is good poetry, & ~~explain why it is good poetry~~. If so, why. ~~what one means by good poetry~~ We will ~~hedge &~~ take shelter for a moment under other peoples shadows. ~~But~~ Swinburne said of "Passing away", one of the poems "I have always thought that nothing more glorious in poetry has ever been written". & he wrote about the great New Year hymn "Watchman" & so much the noblest of sacred poems in our language, that there is none which comes near it enough to stand second, a hymn touched as with the fire & bathed as in the light of sunbeams, tuned as to chords & cadences of refluent sea music beyond reach of harp & organ, large echoes of the serene & sonorous tides of heaven." Then Professor Saintsbury speaks:

The intense, the fervour, the pure

Victor Tell

Passing away, saith the World, passing away"

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"The metre of the principal poem (G. M.) may be best described as a dedoggerelised Skeltonic, with the gathered music of the various metrical progress since Spenser, substituted in the place of the wooden rattling of the followers of Chaucer. There may be discerned in it the same inclination towards line irregularity tt wh. has broken out, at different times, in the Pindarics of the late 17th & earlier 18th centuries, & in the rhymeless verses of Sayers earlier & of Mr Arnold later." &c.

And then there is Sir Walter Raleigh:

112. "I think she is the best poet alive ... The trouble is you cannot lecture on really pure poetry any more than you can talk about the ingredients of pure water — it is adulterated, methylated, sanded poetry that makes the best lectures. The only thing that Christina makes me want to do is cry, not lecture!" There But if one ~~is meant~~ to ~~be said~~ took Raleigh's advice: do not criticise; cry: ~~but~~ there would be no centenary articles.

~~criticism would~~ cease.

~~Clearly, there are~~

the only thing one can do, is to walk boldly up to Christina's Collected Poems, & to say,

Clearly, there are many schools of criticism: ~~so~~ the 'sentiment' tea mania beyond reading hope; school, the "~~rhymeless~~ line irregularity" dedoggerelised Skeltonic & line irregularity" school: & the ~~don't~~ do not criticise, but cry. school.

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The worst of all schools is, that quite inevitably they are
must be schools; & what one wants ~~if one must be~~
honest, is in reading poetry is the poet. "I am
Christina Rossetti" ~~I am not~~ Take me away
from Swinburne, from Saintsbury, from Raleigh.
put me in the open air & then, even if you are
a stumbling inarticulate worshipper, & open me & read me.
And so one stammers out over one little
places where a man reads to us from a book. And
the way to read poetry is to read it for oneself;

All these schools are very good schools, but ~~the~~
inevitably schools imply marking & marks are places where some~~one~~body else
holds the book & points things out: ~~what we~~
~~want is~~ & since the ~~schools~~ ~~teachers differ it~~
sometimes seems better to take the book into
ones own hands & run away with it. Then,
in a some secluded corner one
Since masters ~~teachers~~ differ; ~~they point out different~~
~~things.~~ & therefore it is all rather confusing, & it seems better
to ~~take the book in ones own hands & run away~~ with it.
~~The~~ And then, in some secluded place ~~one~~
~~holds~~ - better sometimes, to sit thinking the wrong
thing & read poetry out of school for oneself. And in this case,
what ~~happens?~~ & what is the result?"

It is something like this:

O Christina Rossetti, ~~one says~~, "I have
humbly to confess that though the day of your
Centenary draws near, I have not read your
Collected works through from cover to cover.
Had you been Shelley, had you been Wordsworth I should

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doubtless have gone through this book very conscientiously, with a
pencil in my hand. For these great poets turned first one side
of their mind to the world & then the other. They changed & developed.
They shrivelled & they dried up. But your course was
different. You were an instinctive poet. And the
instinctive poet sees the world in flashes from the same
angle always. Years & the traffic of the mind with men -
books do not affect the instinctive. ~~Moreover~~. You
carefully secluded yourself from men & books. ~~You never~~
~~read a book that could~~ You carefully eliminated
all that could shake your faith or cast doubt upon your instincts
~~Therefore I have to deal with an instinct, & not with an intellect~~
You were wise, perhaps. Your instinct was so
direct, so, pure, so intense. ~~It~~ ~~In proof of this,~~
The ~~proof of this is that~~ Is it not for that reason that
~~Some~~ of your poems sing in your mind like music – like
a melody in Mozart, or an air by Gluck? One
sings "My heart is like a singing bird," or weeps as
one . . . " just as one whistles Che
Farò, or Batti Batti. And the
~~I doubt that~~ your melody was always made of the
same elements. ~~Sorrow~~ ~~You &~~ Your melody was a
curious one. Earth was a ~~very~~ a lonely place. There
were pomegranates & ~~bright~~ hangings: & then there was
death: & ~~hopeless~~ love. was complex. not simple.
You had, like all instinctives, a fresh keen
pure & breathing sense of the beauty of material
things. ~~You saw with a~~ Your eyes saw the red.
blue & various peacock dyes with an intensity
that must sometimes have troubled Christina the
Anglo Catholic: ~~And you~~ But you had
And then ~~like as a~~ – the two things naturally go
together – you felt the passage of all this: its
transience. Love dies. Beauty fades. That is

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other strings that respond whenever you touch your harp. Beauty is ~~[illegible]~~ intensely beautiful: but all fades, all changes. And Life is full of passion & love: but death ends that too. But there is a And life is also full of [illegible] [illegible]. Funny creatures. Oh yes, there was a grotesque side besides a spiritual. You were not a plaster saint. You had your jokes, you pulled legs & tweaked noses: you were always at war with humbug & pretence: you were not ~~you were~~ - [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] & first & foremost an artist. ~~Have you had that~~ Yours ~~Have you~~ And that resonated this. ~~These little poems~~ ~~in~~ suggests [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] with sentiments ~~poems that~~ is ~~the~~ ~~[illegible]~~ reminds one that one must call you is the artists. You were an artist. There was something subtle & aloof, very self confident about you. A hand extended on your page & [illegible] it delicately of the ~~[illegible]~~ superfluous. Words were kept to their station. Nothing [illegible], obvious, [illegible] suffered to creep in here. And then the path was kept clear for that perfection of beauty & [illegible] of that sudden ~~[illegible]~~ fusion & marriage & [illegible] spontaneous beauty wh. is ~~to the [illegible]~~ triumph of poetry. One finds — here —

But beyond the problem . . .

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some of the lines
you wrote will
be
& adhering
to certain other
in perfect
symmetry

So strange is the ~~human spirit~~, constitution of things that
your poems will be perfect & entire when the Albert
Memorial is dust & ~~the~~ people ~~who mostly~~ will
be ~~read~~ [illegible] themselves 'sing [illegible] & . . .
when Torrington Square ~~is where you lay in bed so~~
many weary hours is is a reef of coral perhaps, or
~~perhaps~~, & the fishes shoot in & out ~~after~~ where your
bedroom window used to be; or perhaps the
the ~~jungle will have~~ forest will have reclaimed it, & the
wombat & the ratel will be swinging gently from
bough to bough, or ~~no~~ shuffling on soft uncertain feet
through the green undergrowth. But
these are fantastic speculations. Let us return to Mrs
Valerie Tebbs & her party. Had I been there, &
had a short elderly woman risen to her feet,
& advanced to the middle of the room, I should ~~?~~
to have turned red & then white & crushed
perhaps some paper knife till it broke ~~when she~~ said
~~"I~~ in their gratitude & respect. when she said
"I am Christina Rossetti"!

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There are of course, ~~some fine poets~~ among ~~the~~ contemporaries
one or two poets & one or two critics whose
judgment ~~of poetry~~ must be respectfully consulted.
But then how different their methods are! For
instance when Swinburne read Christina's poetry he

For us then, who are not poets, but readers, what shall be the
tis confusing enough to follow what other people say;
better perhaps ~~to~~ read for ourselves; & ~~let the blood of ones~~
let ~~the poem & of the poem strikes~~ one,
expose the mind bare to the poem; & ~~then, if it~~
~~it~~ transcribe, in all its haste & imperfection; the Then,
whatever may be the result of that impact.
we after glancing once more through the collected
works of Christina Rossetti one repeats":
O. You are in my opinion a pure & [illegible] authentic poet

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~~Eve~~ Evening over Sussex: Reflections in a Motor Car.

Evening is kind to Sussex; for Sussex is no longer young: & ~~the~~ she is grateful for the veil of evening, as an ~~middle~~ elderly woman is glad when ~~darkness~~ a shade is drawn over a lamp, & only the outline of her face ~~appears~~.

remain

The outline of Sussex remains noble: the cliffs stand out to sea. All Eastbourne, all Bexhill, all ~~St~~ St Leonards ~~are~~ are hidden is are now; ~~&~~ their ~~fe~~ parades, their lodging houses, their bead shops & sweet shops & placards ~~&~~ are all obliterated engulfed. ~~all~~

What remains is what was there when William ~~at the~~ came across the water, ten centuries ago. — The freckle of villas on the ~~red~~ coast is washed out. Also the fields are redeemed.

a line of cliffs running out to sea.

A thin lucid wash of brown air ~~has~~ in which their has drowned their heat & redness: ~~like~~ like a Red lake ~~restoring calm & oblivion~~ an ~~all that the fret &~~. It was ~~still~~ too early for lamps: ~~the stars too~~ & too early for stars.

aqueous oblivion of

And I thought, there is always some sediment of irritation when the moment is as beautiful as it is now ~~so ...~~. The psychologists must explain why: ~~when~~ one looks up ~~from the book~~ one is overcome by beauty extravagantly greater than one could expect — look at the pink clouds over Battle now — & ones perceptions blow out rapidly like things expanded by some rush of air: ~~to heap up with~~ their splendour; & then when all seems seen & blown to the fullest & hard & taut with

& the marbled mottled fields —

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pleasure & pain mixes: they collapse. ~~The pain is~~
~~driven in~~ But ~~the pain~~ - what is the pang it? And so far as
I could tell the pain ~~was~~ ~~som~~ had something to do with
impotency. "~~There is no way in which~~ I cannot
grasp this - I cannot convey it - I cannot make it -
what I am given sometimes masters me". ~~An discontent~~ lay
somewhere in that region. An discontent lay; &
was allied partly with the sense that we could not
hold enough - we ought to be looking with a width -
infinitely beyond me: the sight would fill a gallon jug: & we
had but a thimble to offer. But relinquish, I said
these impossible aspirations; ~~& then~~ be content with the
view in front; & believe me when I tell you (in
these circumstances the self splits into two; one
protesting & dissatisfied the other the very opposite -
often rather harsh, very contemptuous, & Unable)
that it is best to sit & soak. Expose yourself to beauty:
be passive: accept: do not bother because nature
has supplied you with only half a dozen penknives
with which to cut up the body of a whale.

When the

So these two held a little debate about the wise
course to adopt in the presence of beauty: &
soon I (for there is ~~always~~ a third party ~~is~~ very
soon born ~~when~~ in these circumstances
heard them discussing things together, as we drove
through the flat country which lies under behind Hastings in ~~the deaths~~ of
Lewes. They were hard at it; these two voluble selves.

& the down.

They were How happy they are, I said
men who sit there looking about them. At every
turn of the road they notice something: a haystack: a
rusted roof: a pond; they set to work upon it: they

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have out their colour box; they rig up little models of fancy;
pictures that will serve when winter comes, in the gloom of
January murk. But I, who preside, sit aloof &
melancholy. How transient we are! I say to myself,
as the car speeds down these fading lanes. Gone, gone, gone;
past past Over, over, over. & I feel life being left behind, even as the
as we rush, road is left behind. ~~Whom~~ We have been over that
stretch & are already forgotten. Others come ~~past~~
behind us. ~~And whom~~

Then suddenly a fourth self said, Look at that. ~~Star~~.
This fourth self is rather an oddity. It jumps upon one
unawares. It lies in ambush, apparently dormant.
& its remarks ~~have the~~ though entirely disconnected as they
are, have a some authority, must be attended to
because of their very abruptness. ~~Heaven a star~~,
burning in — That ~~Heaven~~ a star. But for the moment it was .
light but that, wholly familiar, & named, & accepted:
it was something that ~~burnt~~ startled alone. It was a sudden
brilliant light; And rather startling & that
peculiar freakish radiance, its brilliancy & its
strangeness are lost. For a second it was that
was odd — And then I held a little conversation
with one or two of myselves, something like this.
Of course I knew that to be a star. But ~~for~~ somehow it
seems laughing, wandering, a signal. Yes; I
will try to tell you what I feel. ~~That~~ like: they is somehow
connected with the future. Let me try to
understand this.. This something about the future. Yes.
what I think is this: the future will be far more

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Earth: infinitely more beautiful than the past. I think that the grossness of things will be vapour. Evaporation machinery being brought to its highest pitch, will eliminate all this substance. Five hundred years from now, Surrey will be cleansed of grossness. Magic gates will open. Draughts will cleanse homes. Everything will be quicker, easier, more ethical by reforms. Look at these moving shafts — these are the headlights of cars: lights will perform duties: the Earth at night will be peopled with spirits ~~of~~ lights: these will do the work. The beauty of Surrey will be far greater then than when William the Conqueror landed.

The ~~evening was~~ sun was now below the horizon: Darkness spread rapidly. My elves could no longer see anything save the tapering light of our headlamps on the hedges. I summoned them together and addressed them as follows:

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how hard we are all collected together. Nothing is to be
seen except the ~~little board with the~~ Clock the
speedometer. the oil gauge. ~~& the~~ There is only a fan
of light in front of us: & the ~~half~~ wedge of road &
bank which it lights up is so much the same that
you must all agree that your receptive powers
are not taxed. So we shall run on for another
thirtyfive minutes or so. Let us collect ourselves in
the darkness. Let us consider whether it is not the duty
of the soul to be one. All these selves are now
fluttering their wings in one nest. All are folded into
forgetfulness. A common life is theirs. Now let us,
who are now one, consider what is our destiny.
We are skimming forward; ~~we are a~~ & towards
The fan of darkness that perpetually behind us.
We have everything we can want — a rug, a foot muff:
~~light enough to see~~ warmth. protection from the rain.
If we could only concentrate our minds: If we cd. only
Close together. If we could fix our light on truth;
~~the nature~~ truth wd. be ~~so~~ discovered.
~~Are we~~ None of the distractions of beauty are on.
~~We are contracted~~ here. We are alone. Now
~~Some great dream that as~~ we ~~should wake~~
Now we should wake. To what are we going?
And all together we then cried out with one voice.
~~an~~ a howl, an exclamation. I do not know
~~what it meant~~. A shaft of some kind had
run up our spine! A violent shock: as if
a charge of electricity had entered us. Nothing
There is truth. ~~Never~~ Had the earth split
asunder? Had some vein of fire leapt in two

In the lit island.

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veins? ~~Nothing seemed~~ Sheltered, unified. The meaning of
our curious fragments, our phrases, lighting windows,
was revealed. And the tremendous sides of some cave
were smooth & vast ~~[illegible]~~ around us.

Is not the duty of the soul to know where it goes!
And to be collected; & to be firm &
Why do you leave me with your perpetual observations?
Why do you not ask agree in bringing one ~~[illegible]~~
another to my notice?
~~Oo~~ thing & then
Let us try to sum up at the end of every days travel
our different trophies. Let us order them so
that they make something useful. Barely engaged
So we stared at in the darkness beauty; the death
of the individual; & the future of the human race;
We arranged them ~~as carefully &~~ side by side.
Today then we have made this ~~little~~ of sand: we
~~Beauty & the~~ Look here: a little figure goes from
A little figure goes through the world; & suddenly it
it pitiful dejection:
perceives that the light it throws vanishes — whereupon
the future of the world is [illegible], & it finds itself
part of the ~~[illegible]~~ doing a much more economical
efficient life: its powers conserved. And at that
it falls into ~~order, & it~~ it ~~feels~~ feels happy:
gingery; re-covered; drawn together into unity.
~~This is the~~ Here we are then ' for the moment
Content; I fancy Does this seem to you a
tabulating analysis? Acceptable & serves for
the moment.

And then the body; who had been
silent to the moment, began its song, wh.
" I go to bed: toast."
drowned my voice.

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Cream: soup. hare, & red currant jelly: & strong coffee:– I drinking a glass of wine:"

which I said nothing of ascertained colour. The day is over. Good night. I dismiss you all."

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Incongruous Memories.

The other day one of our wellknown writers was taken to task for ~~allering~~ ~~altering some fact in his account of a well known person a narrator~~ about the ~~death bed of a~~ behaviour of a celebrated man ~~on his death bed~~. ~~The~~ This ~~scene does not~~ remain ~~What he said in~~ his ~~scene, does not matter – but the fact~~ This scene was – ~~whatever it may have been~~. this or that. ~~As a matter of fact, there is no reason~~ it does not matter, for the purpose of the following remarks is to protest that inaccuracy is very often a superior form of truthfulness. Those who read, whether poetry fiction or biography, know that some words or scenes have a peculiar power to go on living, & possibly growing, in the mind ~~too~~ long after the context has been forgotten. ~~They Whether the shape they then put on is true or false, Often they become far more~~ And it may be held – possibly the authors would support the idea – that these expansions & transformations ~~are more~~ of some scene are what ~~is~~ ~~seen if they much enlarge~~ are not travesties, ~~but legitimate, & represent the~~ & that the life which the scene ~~then~~ puts on in the readers mind is only the proper unfurling & expansion. It ~~is it exceeds~~ the text, if we read into some word what we cannot ~~legiti~~ ~~reason~~ also prove to be there, this may be mistaken. This true that ~~A~~, called to task, we cannot find proof of our reading before us –

for ~~his~~
inaccuracy
in his
account
of the death
bed of.

& possibly
changing.

the proper
life which
showed to
him.

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a natural process, possessed by words when they are. for some reason highly charged with meaning. Clearly, a live scene, will ~~split~~ knock about in the mind, stir up others; attract memories pictures, associations, ~~other~~ ideas peculiar to the thinker — so that ~~at~~ last he finds himself ~~achieving~~ that & so form a further group which may be hardly recognisable, when compared with the original. Yet, ~~had~~ were the author there, & could one present him with the effect that his words has had, he might be the first to ~~exclaiming that~~ welcome the bastard. & to say that though he had not written all this out, this was what he meant — all this was implicit. Turgenev has a great power of this sort; Shakespeare of course; & sometimes Jane Austen. ~~But these august authors are too august to be trifled with~~. These august writers no doubt ~~are~~ owe their suggestive power to supreme artistry — those they say, letting fall two or three words or making one phrase — that will do the trick; & so stop, leaving the reader to realise by degrees ~~the unknown power of the unsaid~~. that he has taken a charge of gunpowder into his head, which long after rolls its ~~[illegible]~~ echoes ~~down~~ among the hills & valleys of the soul. What is odd, however, is But far lesser writers, people of no artistry, no reticence, no great power over language, sometimes possess the same gift — especially in autobiography. On they plod with their narrative; & nothing happens from page to page; then, for no reason,

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they summon up some scene, ~~make some little~~ which ~~then~~ begins almost to swell & move & float & is never afterwards to be dislodged, though it has in knocking about got mixed up with so much else that one would be sorry ever again to compare it with the original.

Here by way of sample is a scene of the kind — taken from what biography or autobiography it hardly matters. It appears in memory to run like this — There was, in the early part of the 19th century, a certain farmhouse on the borders of Holland. Life was incredibly ~~silent~~ & lonely for the boy who lived there with his elderly parents. They were decayed ~~gentlefolk, bec~~ flying to in which dwelt an elderly gentleman & his elderly wife, whose late marriage had been blessed by one son. They were very poor, & very proud; the last of their race, ~~the~~ which had now sunk into such decrepitude that only one wing of the old house was inhabited: the boy's name, perhaps was Henry. And, since he came to write his biography — perhaps to occupy some post of under a Victorian government, he was a boy of some imaginative, ardour, & longing for experience. At any rate while his father slumbered & his mother knitted in the fast dying mansion, he ~~repaired to~~ the Tower, where he had made himself a study full of such books as he could borrow or perhaps buy cheap at country sales. His youth met with no response. The which by degrees he furnished barely enough, but with a few books begged from his father's study, which he would study there late at night under the stars.

on the outskirts stood one of those still towers etc.

used to steal to

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There he would go, when the old people & the two servants had gone to bed, & read in tomes & quartos about Popes & prelates; wars in ~~Croatia~~, Hungary, & all the ancient ~~ba~~ lore of the ancient world — about chivalry, & astrology, & read about battles & politicians & dead mens doings — until he thought himself the only survivor in a world of the dead. Corpses. Many miles separated his fathers house from any other. The fields that used to be cultivated were now thick with weeds; the old roads were overflown & deep in winter mud. Life seemed to be ebbing away from them. In these circumstances, his thoughts turned naturally to the stars, which could be seen, through the tower window, in all their mystery. One day at some

Tale

fair, he spied ~~[illegible]~~ a telescope, at the sale of a clergymans library, & bought it for some shillings, lugged it home — mounted it in the tower window. Now every night he swept the skies, & noted one constellation after another — named them from his books, became acquainted with their so glittering names, & imagined the abysses through which he in his tower, & the sleeping house, were sweeping so incessantly. He was in a fair way to have gone mad & to have thought himself the only inhabitant of this glittering world. But one day — it was midsummer, & the light was of this bright in the sky the fancy took him to level his telescope at the earth. He got the focus of the distant hills: he could see the sheep moving on the side, here a rock, there a shrub. Lower he pointed it, upon a clump of trees. They glittered leaf by leaf. Again he lowered it. This time it rested upon a ~~a~~ farm house — There were

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the vane. the dove, the shadow flung against the old grey walls—
& then, suddenly, the disc fastened itself upon two faces:
a man, a woman; within that ring of silence
visibly Henry held them fast, & saw them kiss:
Miles away as it was, the shock was tremendous.
There was life. love. passion. Sweeping the telescope aside,
he crushed his hat on his head & rushed downstairs,
along the road and into the wood — to become in
process of time — was it Sir Henry Taylor of the
~~Home office~~ Colonial Office?. It may have been —
all the rest is forgotten

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There has been a steady decline since the days of

Among the commonplaces, this one takes a prominent place that the art of letter writing is dead: that it flourished in the days of the frank; dwindled under the penny postage, & was ~~killed by the~~ finally killed by the telephone. ~~Horace Cowper Horace Walpole, Mrs. Carlyle & their class.~~ ~~But~~ Once in a way it might be as well to look into this truism; to examine the day's post, to poke about in the drawers where letters are thrown, to ~~see whether the results are encouraging or the reverse.~~ ~~But~~ lay the ~~letters of today beside the letters of yesterday & the day before & the~~ flimsy pages of today, rapidly written over in such various hands beside those stately compositions that were a week, & perhaps a month on the road & ~~were therefore~~ were therefore much more clearly written, upon much better paper. Dorothy Osborne ~~[illegible] true wrote a much better hand~~ a very different letter from Dolly of the same ilk, ~~who but of our time.~~ ~~But then Dorothy had her~~ she was using her pen to do something different.

There of course lies one of the distinctions: ~~for we write quickly but whether in the old days much talent that would~~ but is it wholly to the good?. A letter then was written to be read, but not by one person only. It was a composition that tried to deserve the expense & that it cost. It was

who probably wished to know
if Dorothy was well & happy
& to be assured that she
loved him,

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The arrival of the post was an occasion. The sheets for the most part beautifully written, were not for the wastepaper basket, but for ~~study~~ reading aloud, for preservation. There were inducements to careful but were they also ~~[illegible]~~ composition, to the finishing of sentences, & the artful disposition of pages. to ~~the p~~ ~~[illegible] &~~ & the polish of phrases. ~~News was spread out: [illegible]~~ Elaboration of arguments. ~~[illegible]~~. But whether Sir William Temple enjoyed Dorothy's letters as much as we enjoy them is perhaps doubtful. ~~Whether~~ Sir Horace Mann or West or Gray ~~must~~ did not, one feels, break the seals of Walpole's thick packets in a hurry. One can imagine that they waited for a period ~~for an audience~~ & then read the witty & delightful pages aloud, in perfect ~~security, for they were~~ confidence that ~~Walp~~ ~~they w~~ Walpole ~~was not~~ ~~did not intend his con~~ nothing was going to be said that was too private for another ear — indeed, the ~~very opposite~~ opposite was the case — such wit such polish, such a budget of news were too good for a single person & demanded ~~to be~~ an audience. shared. Often ~~indeed~~, more often than not, the great letter writers were ~~[illegible]~~ frustrated novelists, ~~or~~ essayists ~~& journalists~~ born before their time. In our day Dorothy would have been a novelist, & Walpole one ~~of~~ of our most accomplished ~~essayists~~ journalists — & ~~Mrs Carlyle~~ whether to the profit or loss of the

& the

the proper ~~to day~~ occasion. a group of friends, a good fire, a bottle of wine.

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Whether intimacy
pleasure, not, or
are the qualities

would think impossible to say. What is true indubitably they practised & carried to perfection a peculiar art, born of their peculiar circumstances; but to go on, as we in our rash condemnatory mood so often do, to say that their art was the art of letter writing is to assume that the letters should be what perhaps letters are not.

It is possible, indeed, that the art of letter writing ~~far from having been~~ is not the art of Walpole - Cowper, & the which we have lost; & that our art, because it differs from theirs, is no art at all, seems an unnecessary art of pessimism & self-depreciation.

Here of course should be laid down the principles of the art; ~~but~~ but since Aristotle never got so far, since the art has always been an anonymous & hand to mouth practice; whose chief adepts would have been scandalised had they been convicted of design & intention, it will be more convenient to leave these principles obscure. Let us ~~we~~ then therefore examine the letters on the table, & the old paper thrust into drawers without any yard measure in our hands. These pages came by post, ~~have the~~ are addressed to one person in ~~paints~~ to one person — are letters, laid on the plate at breakfast — are letters — that is all. They are very badly written in the first place. Whether the invention of the fountain pen is to blame, certainly nobody forms their letters as they used. ~~The~~ No common style of writing prevails. The paper is of all sizes & colours; much of it flimsy enough, or coated with some glaze that

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will prove its undoing. This haphazard harum-scarum
individuality is reflected in the style. Urgent need is
the begetter of most of these pages. The writer ~~has~~
being abroad or in the country wants to ask ~~whether~~
~~one will be free or to~~ some fact – an address, a
date – they ~~are purely utilitarian in purpose~~. &
fling in a sentence about the heat or the ~~#~~ cold
also as a matter of fact; & then scrawl an initial
stick the stamps upside down & so have done.
~~Lessons~~ ~~Next~~, Besides these however, ~~there are~~
though more rare, are the ~~real~~ letters, ~~which~~
written, mostly from abroad, ~~not~~ with the old
wish to get into touch with a friend, to give news, to
draw a letter in reply, to communicate, in short,
~~what would seem~~ as by word of mouth. A
friend marooned in an Inn, one travelling in Italy,
~~man~~ who has taken up his residence in Singapore
is the nearest representative now of Cowper writing
at Olney writing to Lady Hesketh at Bath.
But with what a difference! In the first place,
Nobody would be so rash as to read a modern
letter even from Rangoon, in mixed company.
Modern letters are far too indiscreet. Almost
Certainly they will cause pain. And then
our conventions are so much broader than
The old subterfuges & reticences are all taboo.
Only with very careful editing could them
letter be read aloud to friends. Their language
~~would~~ colloquial, vigorous, unbraced could

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many older people would think it ~~too~~ coarse: &
so casual is it, so careless of the forms & ceremonies of
literature that these letters ~~can~~ do not stand
the ordeal of reading aloud. They are far more
private, more intimate, & for these reasons more
immediately interesting & exciting than the old letters.
Only one person, one feels, could have written that, & I
alone precisely take its meaning. It is a rash
in~~choate~~ incriminating document; the proper place for it
is a drawer with a lock. There then, half
small, with all their imperfections thick as upon them
they are stuffed. And as the years pass they
accumulate. The drawers are almost too full;
some of the writers are dead; others have vanished;
some have ~~given up writing~~ with [illegible] letters. What is to be
done with them? Let us take them down, &
see whether it would not ~~be~~ the best course [illegible] ~~a good thing~~ to
burn them. Then ~~what an odd~~ ~~assortment~~ appears -
~~jumble appears~~ order: ~~Among all the lot there is~~
~~none that can be~~ ~~Oddly enough~~, But for
for some reason, once begin to read them, & ~~all~~
~~such reflections vanish~~ the thought of what to do with
them is forgotten. Page after page is turned. Here are
notes [illegible] to parties ten years old. Here are
post cards from old ladies about ~~our~~ lost umbrellas:
Here are sheets & sheets of wild rubbish. Here are
narratives. here are precise calculations: here
are dull travel letters: here are scraps & odds &
ends. ~~But~~ And ~~Each one~~ one could swear one

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heard certain voices. smelt certain flowers, was horribly bored, terribly unhappy, tremendously excited all over again. If the art of letter writing consists in exciting the emotions, in bringing back the past, in reliving a day, a moment, nay a very second of past time — then these obscure correspondents with their hasty haphazard ways, their jokes & slangs, their irreverence & mockery, their careful jotting up of insignificances, their general carelessness of what posterity will think but determination to be themselves themselves to one correspondent beat Cowper Walpole & Edward Fitzgerald hollow. But what to do with them? the question recurs; for it is perfectly plain that the art of letter writing has now reached a stage, thanks to the penny post, the telephone, & wireless where it is quite unprintable. The best letters of our age are those that can never be published.

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Three Characters

11th Dec.

The Low Brow is of course the rock upon which the State is founded. He is made of mud & iron, or in him, close packed, unsorted, trampled together, inarticulate; are all those old ferns, forest trees, & extinct forms of life which when hewn & put on the fire burn ~~so~~ like ~~the~~ ~~sea~~ coal, smoky, hot, ~~foul~~ roaring up the chimney, coarse, sparking, making the pot chuckle & ooze; at the same time filling the room with ~~in~~ dense smoke, & making throats tickle & eyes weep. The low brow is ~~the~~ uneducated. He is has been uneducated all these centuries: He was a potboy & an ostler & a crowd & a common soldier in the time of Chaucer in the time of Shakespeare in our own time. He is to be found outside public houses playing a horn. His thumby, work stained hand, is ~~to be seen playing cards in public~~ plays cards, holds nags, rings the bell on omnibuses. drives stakes into the ground, pecks winkles with pins. Sells tipsy costers, & generally does with ~~swaggers~~ levels his bayonet when the soldiers charge. She — for he is also she — ~~wrings out the clothes~~; lights the earliest fires in the land; is up when the mist lies thick on the fields; lays the breakfast, washes up the breakfast, sees the children off to school, ~~bears them between breakf~~ is brought to bed between breakfast & dinner of another; is up & about again; goes charring; lunches irregularly; sits over baskets of carnations in the middle of Piccadilly; was once a servant in the house of a peer; has

For ~~many~~ countless centuries
them

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many fine stories to tell; likes her tea black; Cannot get ~~coming to~~ appear in public because she has only one hat: Grows to a great size: has wrinkles like the cracks in melons in her face; ~~likes the~~ knows a lady when she sees one: & both he & she together, live a rackety precarious hand to mouth haphazard existence, going to football matches, sometimes poaching, enjoying a round of beef, sometimes drinking too much, eating the less reputable parts of animals. Breed in great bunks, live ~~they~~ on things out of bottles; are often on the verge of catastrophe: talk of the big house, scrape up enough to ~~at~~ carry on, are provided for by their sons & daughters, draw old age pensions, seldom go to church; & live in a cottage, ~~then~~ rheumaticky, bury many children, & are at last buried, in some lovely corner of a country churchyard under ~~at~~ the black shade of some very old yew tree, or in London perhaps in yellow clay, looking over all the steeples & the fogs. & ancient domes of the incredibly mournful ~~mott~~ & splendid metropolis. They have escaped Education: they never write: paint; compose music; or add a word to the vast edifice of civilization - but are nevertheless beneath it all; & their ~~word~~ like the rock that is packed with the bones of fossils & old mud & shells — the low brows are in short the ~~ole~~ rock we stand on. & if a flame burns brightest on top — if Shakespeare bursts into song, or a Keats or a Shelley, he has owed the life blood of his genius to these inarticulate ones, & to many

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way obstinately & grossly uncivilised people.

The High Brow, who would seem at first sight to be the very antithesis & opposite of all this — the furthest removed from the earth — the most articulate, the most educated, the ~~most~~ least apt with pick & shovel — the most fastidious & particularly & fine drawn — has ~~is~~ nevertheless ~~a~~ in ~~many respects this~~ much in common with the low brow. He works as hard with his brain as they with their hands. He has often thrown down his mattock & taken up his book instead. He has won scholarships, lived on bread & tea, besieged editors, supported old parents, worn Fleet Street with his shoes, ~~bought~~ dallied by bookstalls in the rain, meditated hymns in the fog, retired from life, read & read & read — defied the crowd — severed himself from the respectable, lived with this woman & that, painted in garrets, been a journalist, ~~a~~ & thrown it up journalism for some fad or other, gone to college, won a fellowship, been made a doctor of divinity & so at last come, by dint of working & waking & reading & reading to a precarious but tolerable way of life. ~~He is~~ He is always on the side of the minority. He never buys his clothes at the right shop, or knows how to wear them when bought. He is arrogant & strident in drawing rooms. He cannot enjoy his [illegible] or his hunts. He ~~remembers~~ loathes the ~~respect~~ respectable shibboleths. He hates mediocrity. He is heroic & adventurous. His mind is his capital. He voyages strange seas of thought alone. He has no ~~small~~ small talk. He remembers Plato & Aristotle at inconvenient moments. He is superior

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Stalking. He carries his own books about & wants praise, & cannot enter wholeheartedly into the fun of the moment. Politics repel them — they are too corrupt & too boring. He lives on the edge & pinnacle of things. He throws himself off mountain tops. Truth is his wings to carry him further. He sees undiscovered lands — & to arouse revolutions. He is eccentric in small matters. He is too fond of talking about himself. She — for she is a highbrow too — has a copy of Rembrandt on her dressing table — cannot ~~buy~~ dress well — comes in to rooms awkwardly — wishes above all things to write a poem — has to mend her stockings — cannot ~~cook~~ manage servants — leaves the goes for walking tours — shocks her grandmother — has a bitter contempt for men of substance — ~~hates~~ will not be — a Schoolteacher, In short highbrow all women, & adventurers, all those whose minds, subtler as ice axes, pierce smash & shiver & crack the thick thorns of superstition & ignorance; the unlazy, the beautiful, those in revolt against custom & commonplace, the heroes, the voyagers through strange seas of thought alone, bony bemuddled, musty looking, shabby, haunters of the British Museum, unworldly, simple, & fundamentally humane — feeders of sparrows, gentle & crotchety, proud & arrogant, infinitely enduring, absurd, & most honourable of men.

NYPL

The Broad Brow.

of them, it would be unfitting to use superlatives. He is
the middle party in the state. He is neither one thing nor
the other. He goes to no extremes. He is hail fellow
well met with all. He is solid & comfortable. ~~He~~
He takes a seat in what he calls "the Pub": he plays
cricket with working men; he smokes pipes on
village greens: he has sympathy with all classes. He
does not despise religion: he does not despise politics;
he likes beer, he likes winkles & he likes &
sherry & champagne. He offends nobody. He is at
home everywhere. He wears the correct clothes.
He has been at a public school. He was at one
of the universities & ~~wrote once~~ took a good degree.
He writes, he paints, he sits on councils, he
frequents drawing rooms, & travels, & climbs, &
perhaps stands for parliament, & bathes &
walks & subscribes to many causes, &
clears out a corner in a room with an air
of affable geniality, & does not mind whom he
talks to. Everybody is the same at bottom he says—
Nevertheless, coarse stories shock him, people whose
hair is too long he calls bounders, but then he says
I am one of those simple people. I am not clever, he
says; I am one of those stupid people who like
everybody. I am not clever. I am human. I
like the ordinary things, he says, & when I
write a book, I write for the common or
garden man of the world. I dont believe in sets.

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Sets & salons — & mutual admiration societies — I am a member of
no set — I am at home with them all. And I
am a common sort of person — And his heart is so good; &
he sees something in everybody, & he is dreadfully
old fashioned he says, but then he believes in the great
things of human nature, & the great things he says
(& his book at once sells 50,000 copies) do not
change — Its the simple human heart, one wants
he says. he makes no pretence to being a genius — oh
dear no, he is only a simple fellow, who likes golf &
bridge & all that. And he makes money out of it.
But when he has made money, he is too skilful to
lavish it like Scott & Marie Corelli upon
pagodas & palaces. He is never extreme — He
buys a nice Queen Anne house & fills it with
well bred, boys & girls & dogs & 18th Century
prints: & he tends his garden & wears tweeds, &
walks & walks & writes & paints & reads & paints
& makes more money & more money & more money. &
What he says Thats is a highbrow; & he
still he wonders why they think him a
renegade a traitor, & a And he wears
tweeds. & cosmos dine out — nothing of a literary
gent. about him — & he
& never adventures, & he never bores. & he sees all
sides, & he ~~writes~~ jokes. & he laughs at all
extremes. & he dines well. but not too well, &
he is ~~careful to~~ jolly. & uses slang, & calls
Chats with his servants, & subscribes, &c.
boasts of nothing but of being so simple. so human,

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& here the great enemy of the state. the most conceited, the
most vain. the most indifferent. the most smug
the most worldly, & his kindness is
& he washes, & he dresses, & his linen is always
clean, & his sense of humour is always on the
alert, & the older people in the bank — none
wd. take him for a waiter, tho' he has
written 50 books (for he cant alter a word —
he is not one of your fiction writers — he cares too
much for his story & he wants to make
people happy — & what's the good of worrying
with one's style — say what you feel — &
dont worry — the chapter will come —)

of all pernicious of all the humbugs
speak the forth & pride & swollen —
monuments & fussing & twitching &
contemptible parasites on our state
the Broadhurst is the worst.

NYPL

The Low Brow is of course the rock upon which the state is founded. He is like the compacted clay in which trodden down by the feet of all the ages lie pressed together ferns & forest trees & extinct monsters; ~~so that when a block~~ put upon the fire he makes the pot chuckle & ooze & fills the room with smoke & ~~matter~~ tickles the throat ~~eyes~~ & makes eyes weep. For countless centuries he has escaped education:

The Low Brow would seem at first sight to be the very antithesis & opposite of all this — the furthest removed from the earth, . . . yet he has nevertheless much in common with the low brow. He works as hard with his head as the other with his hands. He sits up to watch the stars, often rises to greet the misty dawn. He has suffered poverty & hardship. He has won scholarships, bullied editors, tramped Fleet Street . . . & read & read & read & grown pale under green lamps. & severed himself from the sea & the trees & the respectable & the prosperous & the conventional & the mercantile & the social — until, at last he cannot come into a room where there are clocks broken easily & talks too much about himself. He believes in genius, in thought, in truth, in art. He cannot accommodate his beliefs to those of other people. He is arrogant & student & browbeats & sneers & defames & keeps his judgment high & serene however faulty & feeble his body. He cannot enjoy ~~the bath~~ his [illegible] in a hot house. He needs praise. He needs flattery. He ~~needs some clever not sell~~ But he

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he needs the praise of Plato & Dante rather than the praise of Mrs. Edith Simpson & Lady Patricia Mealymouth. He is weak in body & bent of shoulder. He.

The Broad brow deprecates the use of superlatives in his Con-

In short of all parties in the State the broadbrow is

But he ~~has never talked~~ his

And he is fond of asking why saying that he wd. give all his popularity to write like Flaubert or Henry James but — he is too simple. too human — Humanum nihil — he speaks slightingly of the Chat & it pays of course to be a ~~bro~~ Broad Brow.

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Mrs Stuarts volume in the English men of letters series possesses
~~[illegible]~~ so many merits – is so well informed, so discreet, so
witty & so well written – that one hesitates to ~~formulate~~
~~any grievance~~. lay any charge against it. Indeed the
~~only~~ the charge is against Christina for being a woman, &
against the founder of the men of letters series for being a
man & not against the ~~abl~~ ~~ability~~ of Mrs Stuart who
~~must of course conform~~ has had to conform to an
impossible condition. How should the nebulous,
profoundly introspective ~~difficult~~, unformulated ~~feminine~~ Christina lend
herself to the system of pigeon holes & tabulation, when the subject is of the system, loves clarities
which is ~~[illegible]~~ so convenient for most male writers? How
can her development, her life, her poetry be made to
square & to circle & to: tied up in neat
packets? The series, we are reminded at every turn,
was devised by Lord Morley in the middle of the 19c
century; & inevitably much that we have now
come to look upon as character & life escapes.
Perhaps the system fails from the beginning.
~~There is no such con~~ To give an example of the
difficulties with wh. Mrs Stuart has had to
struggle one need only run over the points of the
two following sentences. Here is the end of one
paragraph: —— ~~here is the~~ & the next
begin . . . Somehow, the mind does not
make the connection easily.

And then Christina's life was mysterious in
the extreme.

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~~When the~~

Speech
(21st Jan 1931

Your secretary when I was asked to come here, suggested that I might speak about "my professional experiences", since your society is concerned with Employment for women. Well, I am a woman. I have an employment. but I doubt that I have much to tell you about my professional experiences.

My profession is that of a writer. That must be a profession than any other: One shilling is all the outlay needed: ink 3d. paper 9d. pen & nib 3. There you are — set up. ~~for at least~~ And again; Dame Ethel Smyth has been telling us her difficulties — how she had to smash & bribe & wheedle. I had none of that to deal with. Women have been writers for some time now — they have broken down most of the barriers, long ago. And so when I came to write there was little to prevent me. I doubt whether I ever suffered much obstacle. A few I began simply as a reviewer: Novels were sent me. I was paid a guinea a thousand words. I think I made 50 guineas my first year. & without much trouble went on,

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reviewing novels, making jumpers:
What an easy, unheroic lot, compared with
Dame Ethel!
I suppose of all ways to earn a living this is the easiest
But wait. I think there were barriers: I
Let me substitute their way. Editors used to send me
lives of Dickens, & Jane Austen &
books about
I do not know if you are engaged in the same
pursuit. But before I began my review
I always knew what I was expected to say.
I felt some pressure on me to
say what was agreeable. Dear Old
Henry James - he must be praised. One
must not attack the Crown [illegible] of
Carlyle. A set of values was ready
made. And these values, affected
the ~~#~~ were almost always hung an inch
to the right or left of my own.
to say what one thought - that was my
little problem - against the prodigious
current. to find a sentence that cd.
hold its own against the male flood.
Now I believe that you would find it
difficult to make many [illegible]
Journals. But I think you will
find it extremely difficult to
say what you think & make

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manly.

For instance, about the war. If I were reviewing books now I would say that war is a stupid & violent & hateful & idiotic & futile & tyrannical & mean display — I would say I am bored to death by war books. I detest the masculine point of view. I am bored by his heroism, virtue, & honour. I think the best thing these men can do is not to talk about themselves again.

Of course none of this could be printed.

Then I would say about literature. I suspect that half the books now written & 9/10ths are frothy. I suspect the view which is palmed off for universality & humbug.

Now that is where I think, as a writer, your generally difficulty lies: to stand up for your own pounding view.

When we come to imaginative lit: there again, I think the difficulty is immense. Take Mr Joyce or Proust. One of the achievements of their books is their honesty, their openness, their determination to say everything.

For women, the prudery of men is a terrible bugbear. Dr Johnson said

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we were shocked to see a woman show her legs. So far until the year 1850 (I daresay) women never showed their legs. Now, ~~what the~~ men are shocked if a woman said what ~~we~~ she felt (a Joyce does) yet lit. which is always pulling down blinds is not literature. All that women have a right to be expressed — mind & body — a process of incredible difficulty & danger.

we get experience want to say yes

A certain attitude is required — what I call the pioneering outlook attitude — the submissive, pandering, abusive attitude.
I don't know. I think that the ~~tent~~ angle is almost as important as the thing. What of value is the naked contact of a mind. If one cannot say anything valuable unless truth — of all what one thinks. Now I found my angle incurably obscured quite unconsciously no doubt by the desire of the editor & of the public that a woman should see things from the charming feminine angle. Any article worth p. that oblique point of view always went down.

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When your secretary invited me to come here, I readily agreed, She said that your Society is concerned with the Employment of women, & suggested that perhaps I might tell you something about my own professional Experiences. Well of course, I am employed, & I am a woman: but I wonder what professional experiences I have had?

& much that she has not told us —

None at any rate to compare with those of Dame Ethel Smyth. After what Dame Ethel has told us, I feel ~~that~~ [illegible] ~~as a~~ ~~as a~~ that I ~~am a mere~~ suppose a pleasure boat must feel when ~~little~~ sailing boat might feel riding ~~smoothly~~ over a passage which has been cut for it in the ice which follows in the wake of an ironclad. ~~All the ice has been~~ broken: a pathway has been cut. She is of the race of the pioneers: she is among the ice breakers, the window smashers, the indomitable & irrepressible armoured tanks who ~~have~~ ~~climbed over rough ground,~~ climbed the rough ground: went first; drew the enemies fire; & left a pathway for those who come after her. ~~Those days~~ These heroines I never know whether to be angry that such heroic pertinacity was called for, or glad that it had the chance of showing itself.

But ~~Now writers~~ ~~But~~ In my own profession — literature — ~~such~~ path cutting ~~was done~~ had to be done — there were pioneers: I suppose when the history of women's lives comes to be written — it is not written yet — we shall be amazed to find how much time & energy was needed before a woman could publish a book. This is part of the unwritten history wh. perhaps some of you will write. I am not concerned with it now. When I came to write, there were

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obstacles in my way like those that stood in Ethel Smyth's way. Writing was a reputable occupation: ~~so long as~~ the family peace was not broken by the scratching of a pen. Nor was it an occupation that drew upon the family resources: no ~~models~~, pianos, no teaching, no great studios with a north light, no paints, models or studio are needed — for ten & six one cd. buy enough pens & paper to write a whole book — undoubtedly & ~~this~~ cheapness, this glorious material, simplicity, this compatibility of writing with family life must ~~have led to the~~ were given great importance in ~~were important elements in~~ contributed to the fact that women wrote before they painted or composed music: ~~Thus~~ So you see when I came to write there were not difficulties. An Editor sent me a book to review: I reviewed it: ~~a guinea~~ I received one pound ten & six in the course of a few weeks: & with that one pound ten & six I went out — this will show you how little I can tell you about women employment — I went out & bought a cat — a very fine Persian cat. Undoubtedly I think that this reviewing is the quickest & easiest way in which a woman can make money.

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But young women, are not simple — not when they try to have professions; I think — that they are ~~much~~ very more complex, because they

O you old humbugs — I should have begun;
O you who enjoyed all these centuries of comfort & prosperity — O you who profess devotion to the lady of Clare, or love ~~of the sentiment~~ of College — would it not be better to spend your 6 thousand pounds, not upon a book ~~bound in buckram, but upon a~~ clothed in the finest dress of paper & black buckram — but upon a a girl, ~~who as I see from~~ who, as you can see for yourselves if you turn to the very next page in the station, has only one room to live in; & that faces north & is over run with mice. ~~Hard~~ A College, I entirely agree with Mr. Keynes, is a gracious sight; but difficult of imitation. If the members of Clare handed over their 6000 pounds to Newnham, some of the difficulties of imitation would be removed; & ~~speaking~~ I am sure that the lady of Clare, ~~would~~ would say, Gentlemen, you have done me honour!

who has
very
little to
spend
upon
gowns

That is more or less how I should write that sermon; but it would not be printed. This No:

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You feel that you are very heavy & important. Also, you know that you own a house & servants. That is ~~what I imagine~~ at roughly speaking must be ~~the first~~ what it feels like to be a man. And now, you women who have gone into professions have put the man into a very awkward position. Let us try to imagine what it feels like to be him.

~~But the situation did not~~ But things were not allowed to remain like that. Women like Ethel Smyth were being born; women like Ethel Smyth don't allow things to stand still. So ~~that one day~~ they take matters into their own hands. They go off to Germany & get Educated. So one day the man came home to find that his servants had gone — they had set up for themselves. It & there they were, playing the piano, ~~reading Plato~~, ~~Tea~~ ~~to~~ becoming doctors, barristers, chemists, accountants, civil servants, dentists, architects, veterinary surgeons, probation officers, factory inspectors, journalists, scientists, Mete meteorologists, librarians, publishers, aurists, Metallurgical chemists, publicity managers, solicitors, dealers in antiques, Bankers, dancers, actuaries, Demonstrators in plant pathology, managers of house property, Court dressmakers, Aero-engineers, Correspondents at Drapers Limited, history instructors, Directors

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of H. P. Truefitt Ltd, Biochemical research
worker, voluntary worker, organiser of women's
Peace Crusade, Guest House proprietors,
Craft worker, newspaper representative.
Income tax consultants, Technical
officer in Royal Air Ship works,
officers in charge of London Section first aid
Nursing Yeomanry, proprietor of book shops,
advertising agents, teacher of Speech training,
estate managers, Home decorators,
lecturers in law, radiologists,
surgeons, factory inspectors, foreign
correspondents — as well as being
married women,

NYPL

10th Feb
1931

an occasional troop of ~~sports~~ a ~~strong~~ a bold ~~some~~ fellows in sweaters. gaiters, roped together with alpenstocks

All About Books.

"The ~~os~~ cold profile of Mont Blanc; ~~looks~~ falling snow; peasants & pine trees — such is ~~my~~ the prospect ~~before me. as you~~ from my window ~~from the~~ Villa. Draw your chair to the fire; take your pen in your hand, & write me a long long letter, all about books." But you must realise that a long long letter is apt to be exaggerated, inaccurate & full of those little reticences & hyperboles, ~~those rash statements~~ which the voice corrects in talk; ~~if in consideration in view of your situation, the letter is~~, it is not a review, it is not a considered judgment; but, on condition that you do not believe a word ~~of it, then, or~~ ~~of what~~ that I say, I will scribble ~~a few impressions, in~~ for an hour or ~~so some~~ two whatever comes in to my head, about books.

That it has been a very bad season goes without saying. Old Mrs Baddeley has read Guy Mannering for the fifty eighth time. Never was Jane Austen in such demand. Trollope, Dickens, Carlyle & Macaulay are all providing that ideal, that wide & universal outlook, that sense of security, comfort & prosperity which our miserable living authors, ~~our~~ our poor ~~novelists poets~~ ~~journalists~~ rhymers, so woefully fail to provide. Hence when the rumour spread along that the diaries of an old clergyman called Cole who had gone to Paris in the autumn of 1765, were about to be published ~~& that the Cole was Walpole Cole, & that~~ Miss Waddell had put her erudition & her brilliancy at his service, & only a purr of contented anticipation ~~went~~ resounded from half the arm chairs of England. This Cole, ~~of course~~,

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moreover was Horace Walpole's Cole, ~~the~~ nor does it need any pedantic acquaintance with ~~Suffolk~~ ~~literature to~~ history to be aware ~~remind~~ ~~ourselves~~ that the autumn of ~~th~~ 1765 ~~in Paris~~ was for one old ~~&~~ blind woman in Paris the most excruciating, the most humiliating, the most ecstatic season of her life. After how many letters, how many snubs, how many hopes, how many bitter disappointments, at last Horace Walpole ~~my tutor, my friend, my tone — but ah I wish not let this~~ was in the same ~~town~~ land, in the same town, nay ~~almost in the same~~ street. had come. — ~~He was lodged in the very next street~~. after snubs, after humiliations, after bitter disappointments. ~~He was in Paris; & that very~~ ny at last he wd. come into the old blind woman's room; they would dine together, talk together, drive together: play again that infinitely delicate, exciting & harassing game of Shuttlekiss which the utter ~~And~~. Madame du Deffand would — not indeed see him with her the eyes of the flesh; but she would be in the same room with him, she would hear his voice, ~~speaking French with a lisp~~, she would mock his accent; she would feel come over her that delight, that amazement, that ecstasy, that mingling of terror & hope & despair which — this presence of this ~~a~~ English man of fifty never failed to inspire in a woman old enough to be his mother. ~~Cole then~~

Nov ~~And~~ Cole, ~~it was hoped~~ ~~Everybody thought~~, would blurt out something: Cole the friend of Walpole, must have eyes in his head; certainly he had a diary in his portmanteau. What revelations might we not expect? Alas, alas, Cole preferred Notre Dame. "On the right hand as ..." "The statue of the late Pere ... an entire ..." As ~~for dinning with Walpole, no. He had come to Paris to see the sights, & see for wasting his time with Walpole, It is one of the most excruciating things in the~~ ~~that~~ ~~the~~ ~~world~~ Every day our hopes are roused; every day our hopes are dashed. Every day he pulls on his boots & — goes to There was Horace Walpole sending his servant to invite Cole to dinner; & Every day

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Cole prefers to pick a few books & do the round of the churches. ~~A more natural~~ Nothing could be more natural after all; ~~no conduct could be more in keeping with what a~~ ~~Nothing could be more a the in the accent to me of the~~ that an English Clergyman should stuff his holiday full of Eighteenth century; ~~should~~ that he should be an antiquary & a protestant; ~~& a~~ that the habits of the French should seem disgusting: their manners vile: only their varnish good: their beer poor, their lower skinny, their ~~religion~~ morals scandalous: their scepticism disgraceful; & that Mr. Rousseau & Mr Voltaire should be both completely dispatched by one called sometimes Dragoon; while Mr Throckmorton's family have French horns; & vegetables cost so much; &

— all this is infinitely to his credit as a live & unconstrained cleric, whose habits are sedentary, when such is necessary who believes firmly descended from the Herberts, who has a jolly parsonage at home: Let him by all means, by all means let Mr Waddell print another 16 volumes of the work of his parish life — but for us, what would be more tantalising & torturing? & Cole one is indeed trying. if you don't give us everything today, & to talk a Mr Walpole: if you don't repeat every word he Walpole said:- if you don't read the cathedral with Dr Osborn:- if you don't & that somehow tell me what was being felt & said & thought in the air of the most curious interpreter in the history of human heart —- Jewish — but what can one do? ~~The dead one care not a rap for us: the dead~~

& we have to regret

Mr Cole supplies us with a complete inventory of the tombs, windows, & other objects of antiquarian interest in the Sorbonne.

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Cole prefers to poke in his books & do the round of the churches. ~~A more natural~~ Nothing could be more natural after all; ~~no conduct could be more in keeping with what a~~ ~~nothing could be more a the in the accent to me of the~~ that an English Clergyman should stuff his holiday full of sightseeing; ~~should~~ that he should be an antiquary and a protestant; ~~a a~~ that the habits of the French should seem disgusting: their manners vile; only their varnish good; their fires poor, their coin stinking, their ~~religion~~ morals scandalous: their selfishness disgraceful; & that Mr. Rousseau & Mr Voltaire should be both completely dispatched by one called sometimes Dranzord; while Mr Throckmorton's family have a town house; a vegetable cost so much; a — all this is infinitely to his credit as a live & unconstrained cleric, whose habits are sedentary, when such is necessary who believes firmly descended from the Herberts, who has a snug parsonage at home: Let him by all means, by all means let Mr Waddell print another 16 volumes of the works of his parish life — but for us, what would be more tantalising & torturing? & Cole me is indeed trying. if you don't give us any history to-day, & to call on Mr Walpole: if you don't report every word Mr Walpole said; if you don't hear the conversation out to Du Deffand; if you don't at least somehow tell me what was by fell & said & thought in the air of the most curious intriguers in the history of human heart — I wish — but what can one do? ~~The dead one care not a rap for us: the dead~~ Mr Cole supplies us with a complete inventory of the tombs, windows, & other objects of antiquarian interest in the Sorbonne.

& we
see no
regret

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But the advantages of belonging to a good library are hardly to be over rated — it is only ~~on~~ on very exceptional occasions that one need have recourse to the classics. Here are ~~is~~ delivered at the door, with the ~~fresh~~ letters rolls, with the ~~morning~~ milk, Things I remember. by the Grand Duchess Marie of Russia: a very terribly ~~good~~ book; & ~~th~~ the diary of Mr. Skinner, an absorbing book: & Boy Green & by God, a very exciting albeit infinitely ~~absurd~~ book; & Scrutinies the a Collection of Critical Essays by various writers — ~~but~~ what kind of book is this? + ~~that indeed~~ it is beyond my power to tell you at the moment, for the good reason that I have not read it, ~~save~~ but ~~from~~ a glance at the titlepage ~~the contents~~ at the list at the beginning I can ~~inform~~ say you that it consists of articles upon ~~Mr~~ Mr Eliot & Mr Huxley, Mr Joyce & Mr Lawrence, & the Sitwells & Lytton Strachey & so on; ~~written~~ ~~by, at these~~ the old by the young: upon Mr Eliot &... by Mrs Alec Brown, B. Higgins, Roy Bulls, Jack Lindsay, P. Quennell, ~~Ed. Rickword~~ Sherard Vines C. Saltmarshe & so on. ~~And if I~~

Childish & absurd

It is bright red;

& can only tell you that it

And if I hesitate to read it, it is ~~because~~ ~~it seems~~, very ~~very simple,~~ for a reason that ~~much more~~ ~~what interests me at the~~ will be readily understood ~~is an~~ by anyone who has the interests of his country & ~~its~~ future ~~at~~ of its literature at heart. The young are much more interesting than the old. It is much more intriguing to turn ~~look~~ forward upon them, than to upon the ~~[illegible]~~ ~~distance where~~ the look backwards. ~~to the middle~~ to the middle distance which are figures of ~~us~~ in the middle distance which are already, alas, begining to ossify to petrify to stand like the statues in Parliament Square with case the one foot upon a book & one hand clasped upon a roll of marble foolscap.

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Let us turn our little bull's eye upon them.

It is for the very sound & simple reason that the young are much pleasanter to look upon than the old. ~~The~~ One is curious, one is hopeful, one is full of illusion about the young. ~~It is they who are after all who are~~ They have not been exposed to the frost & the storm. They have not hardened into attitudes. ~~They have~~ not fixed themselves into public characters — ~~They~~ The Curls are still fresh ~~upon their foreheads, & the~~ altogether It is much more interesting to ~~scrutinise them, than to turn ones searching upon them than to let its than to watch th — to think~~ talk about ~~the young~~ them than to talk about ~~ourselves~~. ~~Therefore,~~ Let us therefore, leave Scrutiners unopened for the moment; ~~let us talk abo~~ while ~~we let take a look at them.~~ the victorious lens.

Flash on ~~whats we let~~

~~it~~ turn our bull's eyes upon ~~upon them~~ the advance, play upon them.

Granted that ~~the~~ years from twenty to five & twenty in the ~~whole~~ of life, still are the ~~most~~ painful? A strange one. And what is our first impression? One could swear Look — how orderly they come. that they were all in troops, & all in step, & all ~~in~~ under the command of officers mounted on chargers. As far as one can see, there is not a single wild dervish among them; no dancing, no disorder, no wild voice crying aloud & alone, no ~~single~~ ~~tra~~ man, or woman — for there are women among them — who breaks the ranks & ~~leaving~~ leave the herd & takes to the wilderness ~~chaos~~ & desire & a wild unrest among the beasts of his followers. What can the reason be? Why,

Stray

when one opens the Univ ~~a handsome~~ books of your youngest ~~poets~~ ~~opens~~ Cricket, & upon youngest poets, does one why this uniformity; or this

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of these is
or ~~this~~ diversity ~~that is even more regular than regularity~~
~~itself; where~~ this their regulation is opposite. so that if
we have a classic here, we have ~~here~~ a romantic, ~~if~~
~~one writes like Mr.~~ opposite, if one poet writes like
Mr. — he is ~~promptly~~ capped by another who
writes like Mr. — ? ~~if one~~ Never was there such a
sight since the world began. Never — as they come
nearer this is certain — were the young so well
equipped ~~with weapons & with~~ ~~as they are today~~.
furnished with such breastplates, swords & cuirasses on
their thighs & helmets on their heads. ~~The~~ Muse saw
never, one dares swear it, a more respectable
army than that which now advances, from the
universities mostly, — to the fray. They are ~~far~~ more
truthful: more honest; ~~more~~ less sentimental; ~~more~~
more courageous: more outspoken: more scornful of
sham hypocrisy, lies, ~~&c~~ evasions; & more in
love with truth; more apt... & yet — (for all
~~the~~ flowers of some [illegible] are a type) where is
the ~~[illegible]~~ single ~~in~~ adventurous. foolish &
devoted spirit who is happy ~~dares to be idly~~ ? ~~And~~ I
~~say, I cannot see him~~: ~~All I can see~~ is ~~young men & women who~~ have
~~as schools & classes~~; young
~~taken firsts in the~~ . He, or she, must be there.
But while they keep in step, & follow their leaders, &
— ~~how~~ to ~~dexterously~~ fight ~~all~~ under plumes
plucked from ~~honoured heads~~ — ~~nothing~~ the
how are we to recognise them? Like the Watch
Black ~~at the~~ on Aug 4th, they ~~fight wearing the~~ ~~go into battle~~.
~~first in the King's clothes when they~~ somebody else's clothes.
they fight & are killed wearing
But since he always keeps · in the ranks, or if
he comes out, has put on somebody else's
armour, there is no knowing him from anybody else.

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And what can the reason be? Why this uniformity, this
or of diversity there is, this diversity that ~~reflect~~ is oddly .
showing as one

The answer is ~~to be found of~~ I can only adumbrate; &
you are free to take or leave it — for indeed,
of all this is guesswork, done by the light of one of the
feeble eyes, which goes ~~out~~ on a out. for ~~But~~
[illegible] Some years ago, then, they began to teach young people how
to write. They began to teach young people how to read. They
began to give degrees at the universities to those who showed
themselves proficient in these arts. And the ~~men who~~
~~[illegible]~~ teachers were not old & hoary; but young & supple.
And the taught loved their teachers. And the teachers
took manuscripts from the young & put circles of
blue & circles of red round this phrase & that adjective.
The teacher said This is like Pope. & That is like
Wordsworth. ~~And~~ the taught began to the age of
be aware that there are such things as [illegible]
Reason & the age of Romance, that an age of [illegible] when they should have seen
[illegible] an age of materialism, when they should have seen the bird in the
only the sun in the sky & heard only the [illegible] under their leaves
branch. They look [illegible] under the meadow —
when they should have been rolling in the meadow
shouting on the hills. Hence instead of writing they are
~~And this is~~ instead of being theorists they are busy
reasoning; & instead of being — of Oxford & [illegible] — of
when be — of
Cambridge wish them to be.

But now let us open windows & see if there is a
word of truth in what I have written. But
the sky is reddening behind Mont Blanc: the
grace mountains are bluing: it is time to
say, Good morning.

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And Hence, they have had no youth. Reason has been at their
[illegible]. They have all the virtues, & none of the graces.
~~They have~~ The shy, the lonely, the adventurous
amour of the spirit when one wanders down London
Streets & match make a match of the idea & the word—
were [illegible] [illegible] in lecture rooms. All the
they know nothing of the feel of words; of the weight; and
their own fingers: they have been handed little packets already
measured. When one dips into their pages,
pages. there is no melody no song; the
Changing rarely defined. I say, & are heavy —
When one dips into their pages. broken sentences,
sentences pushed bare without flesh, without rhythm,
work out eyes in their foreheads, - hang [illegible] so
heavily on the lines of your pen.

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If this is true, if there is now a uniformity & a drill & a decorum

instead of these exact [illegible], a registry office wedding was held in a lecture room with a tutor to to introduce the parties, any age. The ~~ceremony~~ – ceremonial the blessings: [illegible] that [illegible]. that courage. that freedom in of mind from sentimentality & sloth & slop that are beyond all praise. But there is no love in the match. No Ecstasy have gone to their wedding; & if we seek a proof we find it in the meagre, in the restraint, in the lack of song & sound; For they were also left alone to

all that this amounts to of course is that they were very good sense. Nothing more lovely. Or not [illegible] even amusing to them. It amounts rightly to this that the

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[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

there is no rest & [illegible] in death for him who

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Letter One.

You say that the postman's visit is the event of the day. "He comes along ~~the~~ a winding road, riding a strawberry coloured mare, with a pheasant's feather stuck between ~~his~~ her ears, & the whole business of the village is suspended while the letters are dealt ~~out~~ round". Why, in circumstances of such bliss you should wish to hear from London, why you should wish to be reminded of motor cars & omnibuses, streets, shops, picture galleries & movies & new books & leading articles, I cannot think; but so it is; & since nowadays few people wish for letters, I do your bidding — I ransack my ~~hunt about~~ drawers for a sheet of ~~note~~ letter paper. ~~[illegible]~~ ~~But~~ [illegible] Fifty years ago, or even twenty, sheets of ~~note~~ letter paper were common enough. ~~Now~~ ~~In those days, people sat down to write~~ ~~The page was double~~; & Now we have blocks, about ~~six inches square~~, about seven inches by four & a half — which allows just ~~the room~~ sufficient room ~~large~~ for thanks for ~~saying~~ ~~It~~ ~~making an remark~~ ~~or~~ accepting an invitation or paying a bill. Even the paper makers are aware that the age of sentiment & meditation is over.

But to make a beginning — what shall we talk about? London itself perhaps, since you are ~~to~~ ~~in a state~~ transplanted to a remote & a mediaeval condition, ~~where~~ ~~nature~~ the hills are nature is ~~in~~ ~~under a great brown hill,~~ ~~in~~ where ~~the~~ a few built white houses ~~seem~~ are perched ~~upon a~~ like gulls on a rock; ~~where~~ goat bells & the clatter of wooden heels on cobbles ~~& a~~ are the only sound. Here

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we are lulled asleep ~~as~~ by the soft rush of wheels, the fast the
festive wheels of London ~~driving out, going to the play~~,
coming from dances, rubber parties, & going to the
play. ~~At~~ Between three & four there may be some ~~lull~~.
~~Then of perhaps~~ momentary suspense. And then
~~the heavy footed~~ commerce begins to come, market carts,
drays driving in with milk cans; & then the siren hoot
in factories: & then, more and more, a fire engine
clarms the street, & then the ~~day~~ begun begins in earnest
with its waggons & its vans; & by half past seven or
eight the shuffle of feet ~~resound, &~~ is as
incessant as the break of the sea, & by the time
the post is on the table, the whole machine is in full
swing; ~~& one has~~ people are passing, all in
with their heads turned the same way, to the city,
all with their newspapers under their arms, all
with their ~~small~~ ~~leat~~ attaché cases in their hands.
By ~~listening~~ the sound only a ~~good~~ Londoner ~~could~~ can tell what
~~stage of the day's work has been reached~~ time of day it is.
Where you mark the sun, we mark the wheels.
~~At midday the~~ ~~Nothing~~ We know by some
~~curious intens~~ification whether it is full midday, or
a~~fternoon~~, the gradual rise of sound; the midday uproar;
the autumn frenzy. the evening relaxation. ~~And so too~~,
~~subtler & stranger~~,

heavy-footed:
plodding & the
grinding by it

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But how foolish to say we will talk about 'London'.
There are fifty Londons, a hundred Londons, of
which only ten ~~or perhaps~~ perhaps are known to any one
person. Could one see one's beat marked on the map
it would be found seen to trace a ~~mark~~ narrow enough
circle: bounded by St Pauls, Hammersmith,
Edgware Road, Battersea Park. Within that ring we
tread out our days; ~~within~~ & within that ring ~~we~~
we ~~tread~~ tramp the same streets over & over again ~~day after day~~; ~~& find~~
~~an infinite variety of~~ here buying clothes, here
listening to music, here visiting the dentist, here
borrowing books. But only once in a blue moon,
do we break bounds, & make one arduous & rare
dashes beyond the radius to the Tower, to the
Docks, to Smithfield market, to Wormwood Scrubbs, to
Chiswick or Elephant & Castle. Then, returning from
the Caledonian market or from the Mint we
feel no less travelled & returned from adventure
than ~~after~~ upon ~~we have~~ reaching home from Rome,
Calcutta or Granada.

For years now I have had ~~across my mind that~~
~~the intention to~~ ~~a plan to visit break the habit &~~
~~See~~ it in mind to visit some your famous houses.
For years ~~the~~ little blue plaques let into the walls of houses
have ~~[illegible]~~ made their ~~appeal~~ appeal — here Dryden lived,
here Goldsmith lived, here Dickens lived, here Keats
lived; & for ~~sooner~~ or for years the imagination has
postponed the task; ~~of~~ ~~see saw~~ has ~~to~~ shirked
the effort of going in to see what can be done
with the house in which some great man wrote —
book. ~~Then, suddenly one~~ what can be done

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smelling of cabbage & mutton,

with the house in which Dickens lived in Doughty Street?
Not very much. This a ~~thick~~ solid Bloomsbury dwelling
place: dingy, capacious, substantial. Age has
scarcely touched it. ~~It seems still to steam of~~
~~joints of mutton & dishes of cabbage. The furniture~~ is
mahogany. ~~the tables~~ ~~The tables are & chairs are~~
The tables & chairs are as serviceable as they have ever
been. & ~~no more~~ And though Dickens pervades the
house — his photographs, his manuscripts, his walking
sticks, his ~~pens~~ inkstands, his razors, his
shaving glasses, his purses his tea cups, his
cheques, his writing tables, are everywhere —
so. nothing less individual can be imagined.
~~Either he~~ The millions of Victorian gentlemen must
have shaved with such razors in front of such ~~a~~
mirrors. They must have sat in precisely these
mahogany chairs at those mahogany tables.
~~And on their walls tables covered with [illegible]~~
~~their [illegible]~~ Even their faces were not much different
~~from the face that~~ from his, save for the eyes.
The eyes. globed starting. & lustrous, seem to be
are ~~the~~ eyes that see unceasingly bubbling up infinitely
beyond country. beyond controlling: they are the
eyes of a wild undisciplined foraging ravaging.
Elizabethan. It must have needed all the
brake that the firm mouth provides, & the
solid brow to keep the eyes from urging
this ordinary middle class man into
the extremes. As it is the eyes have
worn him out. ~~Later in life they have worn~~
~~As~~ Long before he was old, they had ploughed worn
channels in his cheeks. He looked sunk,

& the respectable frock coat

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desperate exhausted
spent. harassed; ~~long before~~ he ever reached that portly
that comfortable that prosperous old age that the
the house in Doughty Street, seems built to shelter. There
is a strange combat: ~~the eyes~~ one feels the glowing
Elizabethan eyes in ~~con~~ have attached themselves
to a mid Victorian frock coat & check trousers.
They never allow And yet the shiny mahogany
~~desk~~ table, the red plush desk studded with brass
nails, are part of his genius; as the soul of a
buccaneering Elizabethan found lodgement in the
body of a shrewd middle class man of business.
Not for the first time does one observe the
connection between the spirit & the arm chair. ~~From~~
~~the few relics that are left of Keats~~ keeps at
preserved
Hampstead Keats somehow assured honestly for all
his poverty a few books, a few simple distinguished
chairs: a Georgian window, ~~look~~ opening wide on a garden, a
a tree & some flowers & grass where a nightingale sang.

But let us talk about Dickens for a moment.
as if we were sitting over the fire, without getting up to
take down a book. Let us survey the trophies we
have broken off from him – the spoils we have carried
away; ~~The natural sense~~ ~~what has become~~
~~the~~ without seeking to verify or set in order. For ~~it is~~
this ~~is the true meaning of a writer~~ much more the
true meaning of a writer – what we remember as we
sit over the fire, than what we mould into a
hard little figure when we set pen to paper &
write an article. The things that wash round our
minds as we walk, the sudden memories that
& start up as we drowse. These are the moments
intimacy; could we record these we shd. be
~~Doing~~ saying something broken & fragmentary
but to the point.

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happens if one thinks to
What then ~~would one say~~ on the ~~spur~~ of the moment about
Dickens?. One ~~becomes~~ buffets about among odd
characters: & one is full of their peculiarity; & one
is never settled down anywhere for more than a
moment; & they are all very queer looking; a little
houses at Norwood, suburban villas appear: & there are
phaetons & young ladies with rose wreathed hats: but
what a tumultuous turbulently violent world this is!
Does nobody ever settle down for a moment?
How they scowl, how they smile, how they beckon!
I do not feel that I am myself with the characters of
Dickens. I cannot talk – I can only babble about in a
state of high vitality. I am immensely observant.
But I am not deeply stirred; by anybody in particular.
Can I ever shed a tear over any death or birth? No; I can
only jostle & shove: true sometimes I feel a general
sense of immensity & fierceness & power & how little
one can know of life, how bewildering it is:
then how substantial how exact. I cannot talk.
No; we have to omit everything interesting
We have to nod & pass by. We are very rudimentary.
And then London itself begins to roar, as we sit
thinking of Dickens, we hear the dray the lorry the
Cab horse the van horse: we hear the cries of
men with old iron to sell: we ~~can~~ look out
of the window; & there is the old paperwoman,
in her shawl & bonnet at the corner; & the
people passing — ~~this~~ is the Dickens or the London?
a great work — not a ~~human~~ great spirit; a man
indefinite — a recorder — a creator — & up to his
eyes in words —

δ² 280

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21st Feb.

Another Parson.

Journal of a Somerset Rector.
Edited by Howard Coombs & Arthur N. Bax M.A.
John Murray.

Writing daily writing regularly,

It would begin to seem that one of the chief occupations of a country clergyman is, or was, to keep a diary. & Woodforde, Cole, & Skinner have left between them so many volumes of that it is only in by degrees, ~~a volume or two at a time~~ that they, ~~these~~ ~~in~~ ~~the immense~~ accumulations of ~~their long~~ catalogue ~~[illegible]~~ lives, ~~can be~~, ~~which the diary keeping habit of the regular diarist~~ piled up day by day can be ~~printed &~~ published.

wh. thy daily diaries piled up behind him

the immense accumulations can be published. ~~But~~ ~~It would be a great mistake to~~ ~~at first sight it would seem that these~~ But if the reader should suppose that ~~the three clergymen~~ because they ~~are~~ were clergymen, & lived in the country, ~~&~~ Woodforde – Skinner – too little has yet been published of Cole to let us place him exactly – ~~continue~~ narrate the same pleasant, idle, kindly ~~story which the picture of~~ life to record, they will be rightly disappointed. A whole world separates Woodforde who ~~was born~~ died was born in, from John Skinner who was born & died in 1772 & 1839. ~~Part of the charm~~ of Woodfordes ~~lies in the remoteness of his~~ ~~temper~~, ~~still~~ lived in the heart of the eighteenth century. Its leisure, its dignity, its space, its repose, ~~fill his pages~~ were all round him. ~~Norfolk~~ Whether he lived in Devonshire or in Norfolk, he moved in an empty rural country, among squires & peasants, ~~cut~~ whose manners & customs seem settled beyond the reach of revolution: whose occupations have gone on with little change these hundreds of years, ~~among~~ ~~unchanging villages, whose~~ whose houses were old & agreeable, whose stations were accepted, so that

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there was nothing to prevent a just & kindly man like
Woodforde from relishing to the full the many years of his
kind & just life.

But the few years that separated Woodforde &
Skinner are those very years that separate the
eighteenth century from the nineteenth. ~~Almost on~~
~~Skinner's first pages~~ In the first five pages of Skinner we
hear of coal works, & there was a great shouting at
5 the coal works because a fresh vein of coal had been
near discovered, & the proprietors had given money to
Camerton celebrate what promised such prosperity to the
little Somersetshire village. ~~of Camerton~~ And we have
only to turn another page or two to realise that
Skinner, the Rector, was as different a man as could
~~Then the local squire~~, Camerton this time was a
village of great antiquity set in the heart of England; but

then though the county gentlemen seemed firmly settled in
their seats as ever, it happened that the Great ~~house of~~
home Camerton, this with all the rights & duties pertaining to it,
had been bought by a family called Jarrett, who had
made a fortune in the East Indies. And we have
only to read on another page or two to realise that
~~whether it was~~ the age, ~~or the~~ had had its
This novelty, this incursion of an ~~strange~~ element
quite unknown to Woodforde in his day, is had its
~~share no doubt in~~ influence no doubt upon the character
Skinner family. Agitated, irascible, bitter,
longed, suspicious ~~of insult~~ he ~~seems~~ in long to
anticipate the worry & the strife of There was
nothing of the peaceful geniality of the county
clergymen about him. Tormented by trifles,
querulous, irritable, highly contentious, full of
apprehensions & gloomy forebodings he seems to

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to embody even before the age itself had come into existence all the strife & unrest of our own industrial system – He stands on the boundary of two ages, looking longingly back & back to the happy days of Antiquity, when Camerton as he maintained, was the Camalodunum of Tacitus; ~~or~~ but forced, everytime he stepped outside the rectory to look forward to a time raked & harrowed with ~~Education~~, ~~with~~ & immorality, with irreligion, with Methodism – Catholicism & the love of gain; & the impatience of children – ~~an age made~~ their parents – all of which evils he saw spreading like a blight ~~on England~~ as a result of the march of mind, of reading novels, & of the Catholic Emancipation bill, of some great revolution which would leave England a prey to the mob. Private unhappiness had ~~exasperated~~ deepened & increased the natural acerbity of his temper, & ~~his~~ His wife had died young, leaving him with four small children; & of these his most beloved the little girl Laura, who shared his love of method & his taste for collecting ~~& had died~~, leaving behind her, to prove her truly the true daughter of her father, a cabinet full of coins & shells arranged with the utmost neatness, & a diary, died at the age of twelve. ~~Was the~~ These losses served to confirm in a nature ~~natural~~ grudge against ~~life~~ permanently which even seems to have been ~~innate in him~~ born in him. ~~That~~ Men were ~~base~~, in general were base, that the people of Camerton in particular were the worst of a ~~horrid~~ bad lot – such seem to be his creed. Yet since Providence for some inscrutable reason had taken him from a lawyer's office & set him down to act as the spiritual head of Camerton he would act his part, though

1772

1820

was with difficulty balanced by ~~hard~~ & ~~[illegible]~~ the desperate. depended wholly on the awful power of God.

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~~Uncertain~~ so year in year out, living up to his principles. upholding right & reason & law & religion. Though he suffered intolerably in the process. By the time the diary begins this strenuous & unhappy endeavour was in full swing.

~~How far~~ Perhaps the village of Camerton in the year 1822 ~~was peculiar, or~~ with its coal mines ~~was pe~~ & the disturbance they brought was not a fair example of English rural life; but certainly ~~the~~ it is difficult ~~to read~~ when ~~the Rector's~~ daily reading the Rector's diary to indulge in pleasant dreams about the ~~innocence & quiet &~~ ~~English~~ pleasures & beauties of ~~English~~ ~~old English~~ ~~life in the country~~. & amenity of ~~En~~ ~~life in the~~ country life a century ago. ~~There was~~ ~~drunkenness of some.~~ ~~But [illegible]~~ the red from ~~that illusion comfortably enough.~~ There was No doubt the old village ~~under~~ was charming enough to look at – ~~tea~~ with its picturesque cottages & its. ~~For example he has to visit Mrs. Goold.~~ ~~An idiot woman was locked in~~ ~~The Rectors daily~~ Pleasant no doubt the cottages looked; but there ~~were many~~ there ~~was an~~ ~~is~~ an ~~insane woman~~, ~~if~~ when the doors are opened. ~~Mrs Goold~~ for example was an ~~idiot~~ an insane woman was locked up in her cottage alone, & so fell into the fire & was burnt to death. ~~The husband~~ And ~~her~~ as the Rector knew, There was Mrs Goold who fell into the fire & was burnt. ~~The truth was that~~ She had gone mad through drink; & she had taken to drink ~~because~~ of hardships; & ~~through no fault of her own~~ ~~but because~~ in order to keep her spirits up when the burden of gaining a living for her family The rector ~~was~~ was sent for to visit a woman who had fallen into the fire. Her case

& the quaintness & the amenity

Trudging round the record is sufficiently grim:

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And her unhappy story was known to the rector. ~~She had~~
Her husband spent all the money, & to keep the family together
She had started a shop; & then had yielded to drink; & so
had lost her reason. & so had been locked up alone in
her cottage. & so had fallen in the fire, & so died
after some hours in agony. ~~The parish officers~~
~~What with the poor law officers. & the haggling~~
The husband said the Parish ought to pay for her: the Parish
said the husband & the father ought to contribute. The father
the husband refused; & while they were haggling the
269. woman died. There was Squire Purnell the magistrate
was all for cutting down the sums paid to the poor.
Hicks the overseer was 'hard upon the poor.'
67 An infirm pauper was helpless with rheumatism
was left to lie for ten days in the Camerton poor house
"so that maggots had bred in her flesh & eaten great
holes in her body!" Mrs. Hicks the overseer's wife
put all the blame upon an aged woman called
68 Mitcham who was old & helpless herself.
Then, to add to the evils of drink & poverty, & to
the ~~sea~~ scourge of cholera which was brought from
Bath by a party of mummers, there was the
constant peril of accident in the mine.
Mrs Somers was always having illegitimate children –
brought up her daughter to the same way of life.
Farmer Lippeatt was turned out of the Red Post
Public House at midnight, dead drunk; & refused a bed,
forced out to take his chance on the high road. So
44 he fell into a quarry & killed himself.
The coal fell upon Garratt on whose back but
broken, but he lingered on, being pulled about by
local surgeon unmercifully from January to November.

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Both the then Rector & the Elephant lady of the manor to do
basin of them justice were ready with their half crowns. their
soup weekly shillings, their offers of work & visits to
&c sick beds: ~~but~~ But ~~even~~ ~~the picture remains~~ a
~~village life~~ And allowance must be made for the
asperity of ~~Mr~~ John Skinner's temperament.
But the barbarity & the misery of ~~Camerton~~
the poor, would need a very rosy pen, & a very
kindly eye to make ~~of~~ ~~that village a~~
a smiling picture of life in that particular village,
Sport & merriment, beauty & health, lovely
valleys & hills did of course exist; but also the
the hard overseer, Poor House & the hot dreary filthy cottage. ~~the idiot~~,
the cynical magistrate the drunkard, the villain, & the ~~woman locked~~
idiot woman locked up alone in the room, while her
husband drank at the ~~old~~ public house, & her
children scrambled about in filth at the door.

The Rector found his refuge ~~not in~~
neither in dissipation nor in sport. Very
occasionally he drove off to dine with a
brother cleric: But then the entertainment was
by "better suited to Grosvenor Square than a Clergyman's
home — French dishes & French wines in
profusion. — I hope such feasts will not be
repeated often, or I am sure I shall not be one of the
guests." With a note of exclamation he records the
lamentable fact that he drove home at Eleven o'clock.
Sometimes he took a walk in the fields, or was
busy, & cheerful making a boat for his boys, or
writing a Latin Epitaph for the tomb of some
pigeon ~~Canary~~ or dog dormouse. And sometimes, for he had
a ear for music, he relaxed his bitterness listening to
while Mrs Fenwick sang Moore's melodies very
121 beautifully & Mr Fenwick accompanied her on
the flute. Daily life did offer some

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transient moments of pleasure & ~~respite &~~ & kindness 2
tied a fire-pot to the tail respite from the hard heartedness of his parishioners, their
& ~~the daily round of~~ ingratitude, ~~their~~ insolence,
~~their~~ theft. ~~&~~ but his ~~chief solace was~~ even so,
some suspicion was sure to spoil his pleasure — as
they walked so a farmer stared at him insolently; or
~~as they~~ he divined some hidden motive behind
what ~~the lively & outwardly~~ the apparent kindness of
Mrs Jarrett; it was better to seek comfort in
the past — it ~~was better to~~ And so by degrees,
Camalodunum, took the place of Camerton.
~~There could be~~ ~~There ca be little doubt that~~
He advanced the theory that Camerton was the
Camalodunum of Tacitus. The theory:
needed support, apparently; but was none the less dear
for that. When the floods were out · it
130 gave him a very complete idea of what Camalodunum
must have been in British times: & then,
the ~~subject~~, theory, leading on to led to other
theories, & in particular to a great etymological
system ~~[illegible]~~ of the highest importance, brought
him into touch with other people of similar
tastes. Perhaps the happiest hours of his life were
spent at Stourhead, the seat of Sir Richard Hoare,
where the gentlemen who were engaged in examining
74 the antiquities of Wiltshire held their annual
meeting. It might snow & rain; ~~at night~~ the roads
might be impassable: still Skinner was happy,
sitting in the library, with a bad cold in his head making extracts from Seneca
76 respecting the deification of Claudius & Pliny,
respecting the distance of Camalodunum from Mona:
& refuting a fellow antiquary who was so ill advised
as to claim that Colchester was the Camalodunum
of Tacitus, ~~whereas of course~~ making extracts from
- Diodorus Siculus. making extracts from

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Ptolemy's Geography who speaks of C. of the Brigantes, & C. of the Trinobantes. Both places were remote from Camerton of Works & the Camerton of Purnell – the Camerton of the hillocks & the Pad fields, of the poor house & the Mine. ~~And yet~~

But ~~John Skinner was evidently~~ not immersive Even ~~how~~ on he went, ~~working at~~ making extracts; & then when he got home he retired to his study which was dearer & dearer to him, what the cell is to the hermit, preferable to any ducal drawing room, where he arranged his papers, & set the map of the district in Calico, in order to mark down the antiquities in every parish, notwithstanding the gibe of Sir Richard Hoare: "Oh, Skinner, you will bring everything at last to Camalodunum; be content with what you have already discovered, if you fancy too much you will weaken the authority of real facts." 83

The quotation is characteristic: He was ~~never~~ always alive to criticism. He was suspicious even of the kind Bishop of Bath & Wells. He cd. not help thinking, when Mr. Burnhead, asked him what was the etymon of his name, that it was 'done purposely to put me on the subject of Etymology for the amusement of the company'.

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Mr Bumpsted
for whom
when he asked
Skinner the
Etymon of his
name was
laughing at

So he went on reading & writing & filling the iron chests with ninety six volumes of manuscript which were to be deposited after his death in the British Museum. ~~Of all the~~ Then his life labours wd. be justified; then people who had laughed at him — & undoubtedly he was laughed at — would be confuted; & the truth not merely about Camalodunum but about John Skinner would be made known. Whatever the original intention of the diaries, they became in time what diaries so often become — ~~to~~ the confidantes ~~to~~ whose white pages ~~he told the story of~~ listened to his sorrows, ~~to whom he excused himself, from whom he gained justification~~. & excused his errors ~~them~~, & agreed that he ~~had acted rightly~~, had been ~~was~~ justified, that he was a much ~~most~~ wronged man unjustly harassed. For ~~example~~, was he not the most affectionate of fathers, he asked the diary? Yet consider the behaviour of his Children. And then, he tells the diary how after how his sons turned against him; how they refused to help him to gather his tythes; how Joseph complained that he treated his children like servants not sons; how they lounged about smoking segars instead of helping him to fix his sketches in his diary; how they shot swallows, how they ran up bills for gigs; how they brought their sister to ride with them; how at last Owen exclaimed "Who cares for such a Father?

257 I despise you from my heart" & broke one of the parlour chairs; how he banished them time after time to their grandmother's house at Bath; how how he regretted the money he had spent on their Education at Winchester; how they made strips: how even half the fault he knew for being so irritable. still the sons shd. bear with their father; how the quarrels broke out again over a few glasses of Cider; how, bitterest of all perhaps, his sons

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276 he said everybody laughed at him for writing journals,
278 then at last Owen broke out & said I was a madman,
& ought to have a Commission of lunacy to
309 investigate my conduct. And then Joseph dies: &
the quarrels ~~are~~ were smoothed over; but break out again -
again, over religion finally, for said the dying young man
his father was a Deist or Socinian; & he did not
wish ~~to be~~ his father to read prayers with him: & he
wanted quiet: he did not want his Father to talk to him or
to ~~show him~~ come with my drawings to his room
after tea: The diary bears it all; ~~&~~ but at last
~~the diary~~ after years after volumes, ~~has been filled~~.
The diary remains blank: for on one winter's
day, in December 1839 the Reverend John Skinner
took his gun & shot himself among the beech
trees in the hanging wood near his home.

+

Was he mad? There is no single proof. He was clear
headed, methodical, brisk & practical in emergency
a stickler for his rights, & a firm man in business.
Why then did the farmer give him a broken backed
lamb for his share? Why did servants leave him?
Why did boys write obscene jests on his gate
posts? Why did the bells ring & the peacocks
cry? Why did even the good Bishop of Wells
look askance at him. ~~But him~~ Why was no
mercy shown him & no respect & no love?
Perhaps he sought an answer. when, in Dec. 1839,

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24th Feb:

Aurora Leigh

By one of those ironies of fashion which might have ~~[illegible]~~ amused the Brownings themselves, it seems likely that they are ~~[illegible]~~ now far better known in the body flesh than in the ~~word~~ ~~written~~ word. ~~The public, to whom, the fate has overtaken~~ befallen ~~them which has befallen~~ Like so many Victorian worthies, ~~& they have become~~ ~~of became~~ revived worthies they have ~~been~~ ~~Dramatised~~, & ~~become~~ dressed up for ~~our delight~~ ~~in~~ as a picturesque couple, of as absurd ~~Lovers~~ as figures of romance, as delightful, wearing all the stigmata of their time — ~~the~~ curls & whiskers, peg top trousers & sweeping skirts. Millions of people must know & enjoy the story of the Brownings who have never read a line of their works. They are two of the most conspicuous have joined the great procession of ~~picturesque~~ figures who thanks to the modern habit of ~~auto~~ letter writing memoir writing & photography, will now keep step ~~become a~~ ~~take their places on~~ with the ~~sometimes~~ paler, subtler, different shades who live in books only. In future the history of English literature will be accompanied by the pageant of English writers. ~~And~~ ~~already~~ there must be a large number of people who ~~know~~ Tennyson in his wideawake, & Rossetti with his wombat & ~~At~~ George Eliot looking like a horse, & Oscar Wilde & ~~A~~ Stevenson in short sleeves, &

as typical lovers,

who eloped from a house in Wimpole Street

and to dwell in times gone by lived so sheltered so secret a live only on her. him.

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these figures
with the
Knew

with his button hole, & Whistler with his white lock, Carl &
✱ & who, could go on from these data to give vivid
& voluminous accounts ~~of their private lives, without
ever having read a~~ of all these peoples private lives,
& feel towards them ~~all then~~ whether they were good or
bad — ~~as~~ by them without passing any judgment upon them
for what they did in their books. ~~And to~~ This
kind of immortality of course ~~nobody is~~
& there is no reason to disparage it — ~~the~~
~~is inevitable~~ ~~comes~~ ~~once we~~ ~~the~~ ~~is as has~~
inevitably ~~to~~ ~~when~~ befallen the Brownings.
They were immensely picturesque. They
To such immortality — & there is no reason to
disparage it — the Brownings are ~~particularly~~
particularly vulnerable. It needs no great
imagination — it appeals to all that is dramatic &
highly coloured in our natures — to see them as
the lyrical. ~~the proud. the splendid the~~
adventurous pair of lovers. ~~And it have~~ it
escaping — & ~~As~~ the contrast is to us particularly
spicy & agreeable — in curls & hay top frown,
with the spaniel Flush & the maid Wilson following behind with bag
from Wimpole St in 1846 — to all the
delights of love & Italy & health & freedom.

unless we
disown at
the same time
the blessings
of the
gramophone,
the wireless,
& the
aeroplane
& all
modern
scientific
progress —

~~But~~ The works of the Brownings are much
less familiar than ~~their~~ they symbols. Sordello &
The Ring & the Book & Men & Women & Pippa
Passes & the rest are said to be, if we take
slight references & absence of reference for token,
to have lost their significance. The modern
view would seem to be that Robert Browning is

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an untidy a lazy a careless a ~~too fr~~ commonplace hearty a middle class poet: who covered up an essentially shallow mind with a tangle of untidy confused verbiage: who ~~cannot be read~~ no longer deals an electric shock to his readers, who is scarcely worth as a poet the bother that our forbears made with him. As for Elizabeth Barrett Browning her fate is ~~even~~ as a writer is even more depressing. Nobody reads her. That part of the garden of English poetry is hopelessly run to seed. Christina Rossetti we read & reprint. She moves gradually & invariably to the front place among English women poets. Elizabeth who was so much her superior in life has fallen further & further behind. People are heard to Elizabeth had a heart of gold, her ~~agt~~ are agreed; & perhaps half of one sonnet might pass muster: but her grammar is bad, her sentiment is repulsive: she is inchoate & confused & turbulent & effusive, ~~where~~ at a season too when such faults are most unpardonable. The dishevelled head, the careless clumsy gestures, the cant & the emphasis of this great little Victorian sibyl put her hopelessly down stairs; in the servants quarters, where she finds Mrs Hemans, Eliza Cooke, Jean Ingelow. & their brothers ~~R~~ Alexander Smith & Robert Montgomerie.

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~~Thus if we take~~ Aurora Leigh from the shelf it is
with the ~~amused~~ amused condescension with which
we ~~lift out from some old~~ a cupboard ~~the~~ any
other discarded trophy of the mid-Victorian taste –
Aurora Leigh has much the look of being

And her masterpiece Aurora Leigh has ~~all~~ much the look
of a bead purse, or a cluster of wax fruit under glass; ~~as~~ —
~~something curious & dusty & out of the out of~~
~~touch with the present taste that it is almost worth~~
One can only read it ~~with the amusement & the~~
condescension with which one displays

Therefore if we take Aurora Leigh from the
shelf it is not ~~so~~ much in order to read it, as in
~~order to see what~~ muse ~~over~~ condescendingly,
prudently, over this token of bygone fashions,
this dusty mantle, with its fringes & furbelows
~~th~~ that our grandmothers actually wore, this
cluster of wax fruit that they stood on the
drawing table among ~~their albums &~~ under a
glass case among their albums ~~& case~~ filigree
ornaments. ~~& representations of the~~ ~~they to~~ the

To the Victorians the book was very ~~dear~~.

Thirteen Editions of Aurora Leigh had been
printed by the year 1873. Mrs Browning herself
laid great store by it, to judge from the Dedication.
– "The most mature of my works," she calls it, "
& the one into which my highest convictions upon
Life & Art have entered". – And if we
turn over the pages of her letters we shall see
that she had had the book in her mind for many

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year. In one of the first of her love letters she tells Browning
that "my chief intention just now is the writing of a
sort of novel-poem ... running into the midst of our
conventions, & rushing into drawing rooms & the like,
'where angels fear to tread'; & so, meeting face to
face & without mask the Humanity of the age, &
EBB. (2) 80 speaking the truth as I conceive of it out plainly.
That is my intention." But ~~as~~ she was not to
realise her intention for another nine or ten years; ~~&~~
~~as the intention itself deserves scrutiny we may~~
~~we may perhaps compare our~~ the ~~poem~~ idea
washed about in ~~her~~ mind & was subjected to all the
violent changes ~~that~~ of the most eventful years of
her ~~life~~; ~~when at last she wrote it, in~~
we may perhaps ~~now~~ take advantage of that pause; for
& there is something so strange in her ~~own~~ statement
~~of her intention~~, & something, it must be admitted so
unexpected in the first pages of her poem, that we
perhaps ~~imitate her own procrastination for a~~
~~moment~~, ~~should~~ shall be well advised to ~~think~~ come to terms with a about
Mrs Browning before we have become immersed in her.
as to our ideas in order before we become immersed
~~And this~~ clear from the ~~first~~ ten pages that Aurora
Leigh is going to prove one of those books - of the ~~[illegible]~~
That it   The unexpected has once more happened.
~~Nobody~~ can read the first ten pages of Aurora Leigh
without feeling that   And, strange though this,
~~so~~ one cannot read the first ten pages of Aurora
Leigh without realising that the ancient Mariner
who is to be found in all sorts of unlikely places
~~has so~~ holds us with his skinny hand &
we are going to listen like a three years child to
while Elizabeth Barrett Browning tells us in
nine books of blank verse the story of Aurora Leigh.

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We cannot then deny Mrs Browning some rare,
some enviable power plainly. Forthrightness, abundance,
energy, lack of inhibition — these go that one would
qualify those ~~early~~ first rushed pages. ~~There is a~~
~~See how~~ quickly & ~~she boldly she sketches herself~~ —
fearlessly, boldly she brings before us. 'my mother'
whose rare blue eyes were shut from seeing me
when scarcely I was four years old,

& then
My father was an austere Englishman,
Who, after a dry life-time spent at home
In college-learning, law, & parish talk,
Was flooded with a passion unaware,
His whole provisioned & complacent past
Drowned out from him that moment.

He ~~too~~ died & the child was sent to be brought up in
England; by ~~spent~~ & ~~here is her impression of~~ which from
the ~~train window seem to her~~ who stands ~~upon~~
on the step of the county ~~house~~ to
"I think I see my father's sister stand
Upon the hall-step of her country-house
To give me welcome:
She was dressed in black. Her somewhat narrow
forehead was braided tight with brown hair
pricked with gray; ~~by~~ she ~~was~~ had a close mild
mouth; eyes of no colour; & cheeks the colour of
roses pressed in books, 'Kept more for ruth than
pleasure,— if past bloom, past fading also'.
The lady has lived a quiet life, which was not
life at all, between the vicar & the county
squires, giving her Christian gifts upon knitting
stockings, stitching petticoats "Because we
are of one flesh, after all & need one flanne—

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— Enough has been said to show that this poem has undeniable descriptive gifts, of poetic or not, & that our attention is held; our emotions aroused; & we whatever more, we have been admitted without any flourish of introduction to ~~some thing~~ intimacy ~~of a kind~~ with a woman who is not, ~~it cannot be~~ at all like the legendary figure — ~~the small ugly plaintive,~~ small, looking too exuberantly from between great spaniel ears of ~~dark~~ curls. We To answer the question which these first rapid pages, describing Italy, England, mother father Aunts & English country life have roused in us we must have recourse to biography. What was the life of the woman who wrote like this?

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But she hoarded her intention during those ten astonishing years of health & happiness, ~~& it was not written until those ten~~ 1856; ~~when it~~ & when at last it appeared in 1856 she might well feel that it contained the best that she had to give. Perhaps ~~it is for this reason that we are f~~ this has something to do with the surprise that awaits us. ~~Something of the glow, something of the rapture of the~~ at any rate, we cannot read the first twenty pages of Aurora Leigh without realising that the ancient mariner, who lingers haunts so ~~many~~ unmarked ~~round~~ at this porches, holds us fast & is about to make us listen while E. B. B. pours forth in nine books of blank verse the story of Aurora Leigh. Speed & energy & abundance, forthrightness & complete self-confidence — these are the qualities that hold us enthralled. ~~Before we~~ Floated off our feet by them we learn before many minutes are passed that Aurora was the child of an Italian mother 'whose rare blue eyes were shut from seeing' her when she was scarcely four years old. Her father was an austere Englishman

at the porch of this book & ~~of~~ not of that,

NYP

analyse our
multitudinous
impressions.

This very hasty – abstract sketch of the first book of Aurora Leigh does of course no justice, but having gulped it ~~whole~~ the elements we ~~[illegible]~~ are ~~in possession of some~~ contain whole we are now in a state where some reflection, some attempt ~~at~~ to ana analysis becomes desirable. ~~And the first impression is one that the curious sense of being~~ in And the first of these impressions & perhaps the strongest is the sense of the writer's presence; ~~the~~ ~~[illegible]~~ ~~the~~ ~~voice indeed rings in our ears.~~ Through the voice of Her character, her frailty, her idiosyncrasy of Elizth ring in our ears. ~~This is inimitable~~.

~~We turn instinctively to~~ ~~And before~~ we began the ~~second book~~ we turn instinctively, to supplement & clarify our perceptions, to Mrs Browning's history, to her life, to her letters, to an admirable summary which many years ago Mr Percy Lubbock made of ~~her letters~~. ~~For it is clear that the woman~~ those thick volumes. And with the voice of Aurora Leigh in our ears the old familiar story of Elizabeth Barrett at once takes on a fresh significance as if we applied a magnet to a heap of miscellaneous filings. The facts are of course the familiar facts. Miss Elizabeth Barrett was a delicate & precocious girl, of great parts, who learnt Greek without learning the accents; whose favourite brother was drowned; who ~~lived a life of complete seclusion on a sofa~~; who was was immured by the tyranny of her father in a sick room; ~~who lived a life of complete seclusion who in a~~ whose ~~window did not~~ even ~~look on to the street~~; ~~who~~ who after years of almost ~~[illegible]~~ conventual seclusion & submission left the house one day, ~~with her dog,~~ & to marry a poet. But now how

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differently we view those facts. The submissive invalid, the drooping blue stocking possessed in the first place a vehement spirit, & very little taste for Greek. ~~#~~ Books are dear provided were not an end in themselves but a means of living. ~~The boy tapping on the window & shouting~~ She read through folios because she was forbidden to scamper over the grass. She ~~ravished her affec~~ wrestled with Aeschylus & Plato because it was utterly out of the question for ~~her to go~~ argue about politics with ~~live~~ live men & women social reformers. All her instincts were active, political, even practical. ~~But~~ ~~If~~ But ~~Had she been born with a healthy body & with a~~ here fate intervened. In the first place there was her sex. To be born a woman in the ~~year~~ [illegible] in either a woman's education was, as ~~she says~~ Aurora found a torture. ~~Or~~ [To make matters worse, she was a delicate woman; & finally to] There was no Education; no ~~Sch~~ teaching, no playing, no freedom in literally a [illegible]: those days for girls. Next, she was undeniably a delicate girl. Her health broke down. Finally, as if these inhibitions were not enough to ~~thwart~~ & stunt & deform, ~~there~~ her father, ~~after the~~ ~~assumed complete control of her motherless children,~~ & compelled her to a discipline, ~~which~~ & immured her with a ruthless she was completely in the power of a father who desired not merely that she should submit her daily will & pleasure to his, for that was usual enough, but that ~~she should check all~~ that her affections should be thwarted, & her whole nature cramped into one room, which he held the

in the year 1806

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but that she should give up her independence, her affections, her & all that was ~~known~~ then allowed of personal life to his control. Few conditions could have been more harmful to her gifts as a poet. Her feelings, which were strong & lively, were forced to spend themselves upon ~~detail~~; ~~which inevitably became swollen to an unwholesome~~ & naturally magnified those trifles were until they ~~became~~ into prodigies. ~~The spaniel~~ Flush the spaniel represented Everywhere in Mrs Brownings letters we come upon traces of this magnification. Flush the spaniel is stolen, & she suffers as a woman might suffer for her only child. The ivy tapping on the window ~~was~~ had to serve for the crash of trees in a gale. Every sound was enlarged; every experience exaggerated; ~~But~~ then we must remember the stillness of the sickroom, the dreariness of Wimpole Street; ~~The road~~ Only a naturally vigorous & healthy mind, could have survived such conditions; ~~But~~ or a mind naturally in love with solitude, a mind contemplative, abstract, which could feed upon the lore of books, a scholarly concentrated fastidious mind; Tennyson as we know shrank away to Farringford; Christina Rossetti immured herself in ~~the~~ churches & penitentiaries. But the mind of Elizabeth Barrett Browning was a lively, secular, adventurous mind. Her chief reading as a young woman was the novels of Balzac & George Sand. When

trifles

magnified

that broke
the silence of the
sickroom was

every trifle
that broke
the monotony
of Wimpole

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gained her liberty at last she loved to wander sit in ~~restaur~~ cafe's & look at people passing: she loved argument in politics & society; she was All her interests were in the present state of the world: she longed to remedy present evils, debate future policies, & discuss what was to be the lot of Italy under the French. Past glories, ruins, ~~&~~ even the triumphs of art left her, as Mr L. points out cold; or, if, for she was of a hot temperament & boiled easily, she warmed over ~~the pictures~~ the art & literature of the past it was so with a conventional & ready made enthusiasm which sat lightly upon a spirit that ~~was never~~ in life, in politics, in the affairs of the moment was ~~brilliantly~~ perceptibly collected, unconventional, outspoken independent, & curiously ~~without~~ independent & original.

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~~No doubt it is~~ no doubt of imperfection in ~~a writer~~ an artist,
a sign ~~perhaps that the writer is an imperfect~~ writer;
for ~~Mrs Browning was incapable~~. but ~~Mrs~~
but stimulating, if, as in ~~her~~ this case, the
self ~~is freely & frankly~~ ~~comes to the surface~~

but

Mrs Browning could no more conceal herself than
she could control herself. And if she has the
weakness of the impulsive she has also the charm.
~~We~~ Hence we find ourselves comparing Aurora
with Elizabeth; & turning from ~~to~~ the ~~letters~~ life &
letters of Mrs Browning to Aurora, & from
Aurora to Mrs Browning. ~~Which~~ ~~is such~~
~~Unwarranted~~ The relation between a woman's ~~her~~ life & a woman's work was then inevitably
close. ~~And yet~~ ~~They~~ & The critic who
~~would~~ treat the work of the Victorian women
writers as if it were done under the same
conditions as the work of their ~~male~~ male contemporaries
~~of the other~~ sex must be able to shut his ears &
~~ble~~ close his eyes to many ~~highly~~ curious facts.
~~Elizabeth~~. ~~The familiar~~ ~~story of~~ of Elizabeth life is
Barrett is ~~so familiar that it can be~~ circumstances
of course an extreme example of ~~an~~
that must have been rare even in those days—
The facts of Elizabeth Barrett's life are familiar
& can be run over in a ~~S~~ Elay
And of course the career Mrs Browning was an extreme
example of case; ~~one~~ ~~& are so familiar~~
~~be~~ ~~Ex~~ As everybody knows she was the
delicate & precocious daughter child of rich parents; her

Nor is this
correspondence
due solely to
~~Indeed~~,
Mrs Browning's
~~was~~ imperfection
as an
artist.

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mother died when she was a child; she plunged headlong into Latin & Greek & read profusely; her favourite brother was drowned; her health gave way; she was immured by the tyranny of her father in a sick room in Wimpole Street; & after years of almost conventual seclusion she eloped at at the age of [illegible] & married a poet. ~~She thus suffered a repulse~~ ~~She~~ ~~She~~ She herself describes [illegible] ~~better than~~ But her own description of the life & its effect on her is far the best. "

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Here she breaks off. But ~~we can continue~~ with Aurora Leigh to help us we can finish her sentence. ~~Her~~ The damage her circumstances had done her was very deep. ~~A mind For she was~~ by nature unfit to profit Few conditions cd. have been more prejudicial to her gift as a poet.

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For it is instantly clear that the mind which found its most complete expression in Aurora Leigh was not the mind to profit by solitude. An abstract, a scholarly, a fastidious mind might have used ~~her solitude~~ solitude & seclusion for the development of its powers. Many poets would have asked no better fate than to live alone with books, in the heart of the country. But the mind of Elizabeth Barrett was, ~~it becomes clear~~, lively & secular & adventurous. Books were to her not an end in themselves but a ~~substitute~~ substitute for living. She raced through folios because she was forbidden to scamper on the grass. She wrestled with Aeschylus & Plato because it was forbidden her to ~~meet~~ argue on equal terms with her fellows about politics. But the [illegible] was also [illegible] Her favourite reading as an invalid was Balzac & George Sand & ~~the~~ because 'they kept the colour in my life to some degree'. ~~When~~ Nothing is more striking ~~than the~~ when at last she broke the prison bars, than the fervour with which she fell upon real life. She loved to sit in the Parisian café's & look at people passing. She loved the living world, its arguments, its politics, its society. The past & its ruins

& other
(immortal
improprieties

NYA

~~write~~ Such being the ~~habit~~ turn of ~~her~~ her natural temper, of her mind it is not surprising that ~~her~~ she intended, ~~even when she was trifly~~ to write a 'novel-poem', even when she was triply imprisoned, by her sex, her health & her father, in the seclusion of a bedroom in Wimpole Street. ~~But how could she rush into a drawing room, & meet face to face the Humanity of the age, & speak the truth of it out plainly, when the only life she knew was the gentle buzz of domestic life, like when she had seen no Human nature, & no mountains or rivers, when to all intents in fact she was a blind poet, who~~ But ~~her~~ her circumstances forbade. ~~To all~~ She was, as she said, a 'blind poet'. She ~~knew~~ had seen no Human nature. She had seen no mountains or rivers. She had lived entirely alone, guessing at what was outside, & inevitably magnifying into ~~ext~~ prodigies such ~~trifles~~ her ~~own feelings, her spaniel, her father;~~ what ~~until she~~ her own inner feelings. [The loss of her spaniel affected her as another woman might be affected by the loss of a child. The tap of the ivy on the window became like the thrash of a tree in a gale.] Every sound was enlarged, every episode exaggerated, for the silence of the sick room was profound & the monotony of Wimpole Street was intense. Wisely she waited until her escape gave her some measure of freedom. But it cannot be doubted that the long years of seclusion had done her irreparable damage ~~to her art~~, & that when at last she was able to follow her bent, & to rush into drawing rooms & the like & meet ~~ene~~ face to face & without mask the Humanity of the age & speak the truth of it out plainly, the ~~years~~ solitude & repression, ~~imprisonment had done~~ left their mark. ~~&~~ she wrote   She was exhausted.

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~~Excited~~ ~~& blinded & a~~ by the plain light of day, was too much for her.

~~Or~~ She was exhausted, ecstatic, & half dazzled.
~~Escape had come too late for the poet. her as a poet.~~
was too weak to stand the shock. by riding daily out, & riding [illegible]

Aurora Leigh the novel-poem is not therefore the
masterpiece that it might have been. Rather it is a masterpiece in
embryo; a work ~~in which~~ whose genius ~~is~~ floats diffused &
~~squandered~~, & dispersed, ~~as if~~ ~~never~~ ~~& never~~
~~as if~~ waiting some ~~further~~ ~~process~~ ~~to~~ ~~to~~ take
~~its~~ final process. ~~&~~ fluctuating & waiting some
final stroke of creative power to bring it into
being. Nevertheless even so it is a book of great vitality: &
~~all~~ attractive power. ~~of extreme~~ ~~& suggestive~~
~~power~~. ~~readable~~, stimulating, irritating, ~~[illegible]~~
absurd, ~~[illegible]~~, struggling, beautiful, ungainly,
all by turns; ~~it~~ ~~when~~ ~~which however too, the~~
~~quality that which only the~~ And in addition,
~~since~~ Mrs Browning was ~~in earnest, since~~
~~she~~ was no professional hack; but one of those
rare people who live adventurously & disinterestedly
~~independently~~ ~~in their~~ an imaginative life which
is independent of their private lives &
~~Hence, her desire to write a 'novel-poem' remains~~
her intention is one that still ~~offers no~~
excites our interest & respect. Indeed it ~~still~~
invites discussion. ~~Here she~~ She was a
poet, yet she wished to ~~write a novel in poetry~~.
use her poetry in a novel. Aurora ~~Leigh~~ gives
the reason. Abridged & simplified, it maybe ~~seems these~~. runs thus
The ~~D~~ sole work of poets, according to Aurora, is to
present their age, not Charlemagne's. ~~For~~ more

in some
vague
pre-natal
state

in the 5th
book of her
poem

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[brawls cheats maddens, calculates, aspires] passion –
heroism take place now in drawing-rooms than in the
than with Roland at Roncesvalles. To flinch from
188 modern varnish, coat or flounce, cry out for togas &
the picturesque, is fatal, — foolish too"
Living art presents & records true life: & the only life
we can truly know is our own. But what form
can a poem upon modern life take? The drama
had become impossible because the standard of the
public taste had sunk so low that only a popular
docile & servile play has any chance of success.
The great days of the poetic play are over.
~~Our time moreover,~~ what we, in 1856, have to say
moreover is not fit for ~~the painted scene~~;
boards actors, prompters, gaslight & costume: our
193 stage is now the soul itself. Moreover ~~the artist~~ –
but here Aurora ~~wanders~~ has to confess that ~~the~~
task is though she can see what she wishes to do, what
she actually does falls short; she has put her
heart blood into it, that at least is true. And
for the rest, Let me think of forms less, & the
189 external. Trust the spirit, ~~as~~ ... Keep up
the fire, & ~~to~~ leave the generous flames to
shape themselves!

And so she rushed 'headlong' to use her favourite
word into ~~life as it was lived by the~~ a long into
poem in blank verse about life as it was really
lived about 1850 by ~~real~~ men & women.
in ~~real houses, real~~ London, in Paris, in Florence,
in

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~~Novels~~ The novelists were dealing triumphantly with modern life in prose.

The desire to deal with modern life in poetry was not confined to Miss Barrett. Robert Browning said that he had had the same ambition all his life. Coventry Patmore's ~~had~~ Angel in the House was to precede Aurora Leigh by two years. It the novel was after all the heyday of ~~prose~~ ie the novel; ~~Vanity Fair~~ Jane Eyre, Vanity Fair David Copperfield, Cranford, The Warden, Scenes of Clerical life, Richard Feverel, all came treading on each other's heels ~~between 18~~ within twelve years between 1847 & 1859. The poets may well have felt, with Aurora Leigh, that modern life had meaning & beauty & excitement. Why, ~~when their brothers~~ should all these treasures fall to the lot of prose writers? Why should the poet ~~always~~ be forced back to Charlemagne & Roland ~~& the toga & the picturesque~~? when Richard Feverel & Jane Eyre & Peggotty & ~~Lord~~ Lord Steyne & the Battle of Waterloo & village life & village life & drawingroom life & club life all cried aloud for celebration? ~~Since the old forms in which poets had~~ It was true that the old form – the ~~drama was no longer~~ in which poetry had dealt with life – the drama was obsolete. But surely another could be devised. Elizabeth Barrett chose blank verse. Armed with this powerful & dangerous weapon, & provided at least with that knowledge which her ~~[illegible]~~ freedom had brought her, she sat down in Rome in the winter of to modern write her long meditated novel poem; her challenge to the ~~Thac~~ Brontës & the Dick Thackerays & the Dickenses; her proof that the poets ~~too can deal with the life of the moment~~, that need not 'trundle back ... five hundred years, ... moat & drawbridge, into a castle court' but can

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slip boldly into streets & drawing rooms, into ~~[illegible] &~~ Shoreditch & Kensington, & sing not only of 'some black chief, half knight, half sheep lifter, some beauteous dame, half chattel & half queen' but of my aunt & the vicar, of Romney Leigh – Vincent Carrington, of Marian Erle Lord Howe, Lady Waldemar & Aurora Leigh. But can they? That is the question: ~~that~~ for at first sight Miss Barrett's theory seems unassailable. But in practice the antipathy between blank verse ~~or any verse~~ & modern life seems ~~then~~ irreconcilable. For how are we going to realise that life is 'modern' unless we ~~give~~ its talk of omnibuses & top hats? & how are we going to talk of omnibuses & top hats ~~[illegible]~~ effect ~~[illegible]~~ in talk ~~in ours in prose~~? ~~in verse without being ridiculous~~? We ~~can only talk of the things we do~~ ~~freely, only by~~ using the simplest speech known to man. For ~~example,~~ ~~unemphatic, usual~~, as ~~For exam~~ ~~the~~ ~~here~~ ~~a~~ for example, ~~a~~ prose says quietly & prosaically, "While I kissed her glove, a note was brought, saying that her father sent his love & asked me to dine with them next day." Poetry, raising its voice in a [illegible] or [illegible] to its [illegible] inevitably transmutes this into

While thus I grieved, & kiss'd her glove,
My man brought in her note to say,
Papa had bid her send his love,
And would I dine with them next day! –

~~[illegible]~~ which is of course obvious, ~~of~~ over emphatic – & ridiculous. The stress is entirely false & out of keeping with the context. And it is Mr Browning of course might have said

quiet unemphatic colloqu~~ical~~ prose.

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& indeed in practice she was forced to allow, that ~~mod~~
modernity is a quality that of the mind, of the spirit, which
can be separated from its ~~to~~ their accidental trappings.
I will show you what a ~~radical~~ young aristocrat
who was of radical thought about the condition of society in the
year 1850, without having recourse to the toga & the
picturesque. Indeed, a general golden haze therefore
smudges out the background of her characters. The picture of
modern life is nothing like so detailed & so vivid as ~~it is~~ in
the contemporary novel. And she is forced to omit
the criss cross of dialogue by which the ~~con~~ impact of
one character tells upon another. Simplifications –
generalisations, enlargements & ~~the~~ emphasises, are
~~net~~ crept in, in the beat of the blank verse.
Much of the subtlety of prose is flattened out, or
raised on high. The characters have always to be
talking at the top of their voices; & they find
soliloquy far more manageable than conversation.
~~Everything is heightened. The~~ It is obvious that the
poet is unable to use the spoils of modern life.
And yet, had she been possessed of greater control,
greater judgment, what an achievement she
might have compassed! For the speech she
devised, something between prose & poetry, had
the great qualities of speed & intensity. It lent
itself admirably to declamation: it was
capable of brilliant description. Her pictures of
a London sunset, of a marriage, of the slum of
London, of a Paris flower market, of the new
houses building near Paris, are far more
memorable than their prose versions. So long
as she is content & able to keep a midway

She might have argued

are sketched with a rapidity & colour that verse alone can give

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course between the fully [illegible] intensity of poetry & the slipshod ease of prose she is gratified. We forget whether the people are modern, or ancient. We become absorbed by their experiences. ~~We~~ But as soon the task We race on, carried ahead by the breeze, by the buoyancy of blank verse. But the task was beyond human skill. It required an ambidexterity that nobody has yet compassed; to stoop & pick up a million grains of sand, & yet to soar with strong level flight through the clouds & the sky. Again & again she contorts & twists herself. Metaphors coil themselves about her feet. She cannot resist the desire to visualise beyond the needs of the perfect critic are lacerated with bright ingenuities. We dread the first signs of metaphor. A nail will

— with silken elegiac thoughts
We wind out from us the distracting worm
And die into the chrysalis of a man,
And leave the best that may, to come of us,
In some brown moth".

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. seeming past
And the
contrariety &
subtleties;
the mixture
of

Tossed up upon the swing & surge of that emphatic verse,
the voice becomes unstably high, rhetorical, & impassioned.
~~The scenes~~ ~~Therefore the scenes of~~ When at last Romney –
Aurora come together, with Marian Erle & her
illegitimate child between them, × The great scenes
in Aurora Leigh certainly possess ~~have~~ these qualities; but since
~~in~~ the drama is centred in the soul, & the Elizabethan
escape of violent action is impossible ~~denied them~~, the scenes are
also ~~monotonous~~ ~~not merely~~ also monotonous in
the extreme; & ~~their~~ frequently absurd. The
emotional they ~~continue~~ pass into a mechanical
rhetoric & passion ~~when~~ until the readers mind is
exhausted & lulled into a glazed torpor by the lilt of the remorseless rhythm.
The most intricate & most intimate emotion
become flattened out & shouted from the housetops
Asked to ~~father the~~ ~~if he will father~~ the child that is not his;
Romney replies Although the scene described is
modern, in the sense that it deals with the emotions of
Mr. Leigh & his cousin Miss Leigh, ~~at Flo~~ in Italy, when
they come together, ~~& are faced~~ with Marian Erle & her
illegitimate son, ~~the~~ & would in the prose of
~~Tolstoy or~~ Stendhal or any other contemporary
novelist, ~~have~~ interested us profoundly, ~~as Mrs~~
they lose in this treatment all that makes
after all, if the word 'modern' has any
It takes the most intimate feelings of Romney &
Aurora & makes them loud & sonorous. Following
~~often~~ the lilt of her rhythm rather than the
emotions of her characters Mrs. Browning
sweeps on to in generalisations & declamation
which ~~could~~ might, for all their modernity, have
been spoken by some beauteous dame or a black
~~Knight~~ chief, in ~~a castle~~ dressed in togas in a
castle court.

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~~Subtle to~~ ~~the difficulty~~

But of course, aware of the ~~difficulty of~~ nature of her medium, she scarcely attempted to use it to ~~produce~~ for these slighter subtler half shades of prose. The poem is one long ~~soliloquy,~~ soliloquy; ~~& for this purpose~~ it Aurora's own mind & own fate is the only theme that is ~~so~~ attempted, & blank verse lent itself in some respects admirably to the moods of this vehement & impassioned ~~lt~~ lady.

brilliantly foreshortened,

Indeed as we flash through page after page of Aurora's ~~Easy~~ narrative; in which are held for our amusement now a ~~the~~ satirist here the satirical portrait of [illegible], here of the Lord Lieutenant, & skim the cream of many odd characters, ~~sketched in passing,~~ ~~&~~ sharply & satirically sketched in passing — above all as we ~~[illegible]~~ shoot headlong into some preposterous yet brilliant description — the marriage in a Pimlico church — ~~the~~ a London sunset — the Paris flower market — the suburbs of Paris — we marvel that the poets have ~~left~~ not all ~~complete [illegible] of what is new~~ ~~modern life to the novelists.~~ this to the novelists.

relish the humour

Gone on to the

From what a mass of tepid detail Mrs Browning has delivered us! How masterfully, armed with the speed & passion of metre, she wings her way to the centre! The triumphs are by no means all ~~to~~ on side of prose. And ~~[illegible]~~ ~~few~~ though this true that ~~the side of modernity which~~ the ~~psychological triumphs of the psychology~~ is ~~premature~~ enough, & ~~Aurora Leigh~~ ~~there it is there~~ is Aurora Leigh is not

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modern if by modern we mean psychological,
~~we also~~ modern it is in the sense that ~~we~~ when we put
the book down we feel that we have been in the very
thick of mid-Victorian life. Aurora Leigh with her
passion ~~for art &~~ freedom, her questioning of life &
morality, her desire for learning & freedom, her
vehement generous interest in the cause of the poor, her
~~her~~ outrageousness of the moral laws, ~~her~~ is
without doubt a the true daughter of her age -
The aunts, the gardens, the antimacassars from which
she makes her flight are real enough to fetch high
prices in second hand furniture shops at this moment.
The broad aspects of what it felt like to be a mid-Victorian
are seized just as surely, & stamped upon us more
as vividly, ~~though writer~~ as by Trollope ~~or~~ or Mrs.
Gaskell. Undoubtedly Elizabeth Barrett was
well advised when she determined to forsake the
Greeks & rush into the drawing room.

And ~~we cannot~~ like all good books, Aurora
Leigh seems to point the way to a better. Disabilities. hurts.
She was ~~heavily~~ laboured under many
Her education was against her, & her seclusion.
Although the space & freedom of the novel form
made her faults of judgment & taste, her
astonishing obtuseness of ear, less perceptible than
~~they were~~ elsewhere, still there are imperfections -
Cleverness & terrible images enough to
make us wring our hands. ~~A writer~~ of
of ~~greater discernment~~ But a writer of greater
discrimination, using verse more subtly, more freely,
who should use his powers on modern life,
would surely find exactly what Miss Barrett
found, & his success would relieve us of what
her

NYPL

for all their merits

And when we reflect how ~~diffi-cult it is to read the~~ dead & the ~~plays~~ plays of Beddoes & Sir Henry Taylor are, how dead in our own time are the classical dramas of Robert Bridges, we may suspect that Elizabeth Barrett was right when she rushed into the drawingroom & ~~tried to express what she say what she felt about modern life~~ used her ~~gifts as a poet today what she~~ & said that here at the present moment, in streets, in omnibuses, is the true subject ~~for of poetry~~ for the living poet. ~~That she~~ At any rate, her courage was justified in her own case. Her faults ~~they~~ were less disastrous ~~in~~ a long rambling poem & her lack of taste, of judgment, & in a long poem than in a short. ~~The reader has~~ time to recover from ~~her~~ Her lack of taste & judgment, her tortured ingenuity, her ~~headlong~~ floundering & scrambling & confusion, ~~was~~ have space here to work themselves off; while ~~her vehemence~~, her conviction, her brilliance & the ~~keen~~ abundance of h descriptive powers carry us along & her something ardent & infatuated in her description ~~persuade us that~~ when applied to the things that she had long known & seen before her eyes bring them before us, [illegible]! ~~we~~ so that we laugh, no doubt, & protest & find a thousand absurdities but read ~~to~~ enthralled to the end. ~~If only~~ But perhaps the best tribute we can pay to Aurora Leigh is to wonder why it has left ~~not~~ ~~had~~ no successors. why ~~the book novel-poem whose~~ Teeming with promise, calling out all the powers of the poet, the ~~we~~ novel-poem of our time ~~Itali~~ why, when ~~it~~ the sketch she flung out.

the means fit for the use of the living poets.

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How far can a ~~novel become a poem in blank or in~~
~~any other verse without losing the its virtues as a~~
~~novel~~! Let us see what happens to a poet
who ~~attempts to deal with~~ ~~the modern~~ ~~life as it is~~
~~lived at the moment~~ wishes to poach upon the novelists
preserves & to give us, not ~~a~~ merely a lyric about his own
feelings, or an epic about men & women in togas, but
the story ~~narrative~~ of many lives ~~in conflict,~~ ~~battle~~
moving, changing ~~developing~~, driven by all the interests & passions
which are ours at this precise moment ~~ag~~ in the middle
nineteenth century. How will he ~~deal with the~~
convey to us the necessary information that the hero is
asked ~~out~~ out to dinner? As quickly & prosaically
as possible, the novelist would say, in like this. "While
I kissed her glove, in a state of melancholy, a note was
brought, saying that her father sent his regards, and ✗
no emphasis c . . . .

~~But again, the~~ ~~Then, again~~ But ~~Nex~~ Then again, modern
life consists as Mr B. indicated when she said that our
stage was very the soul, in ~~what~~ we feel for each other, or
in feelings in thought
~~what~~ we in some quality of the mind or some
peculiarity of ~~the character~~, in what
in ~~some~~ quality of the mind & character which
reveals itself not in the action proper to the drama,
but in ~~talk~~ talk, ~~or in those situations~~ where the
the dialogue which in a Dickens Thackeray Jane
~~Austen found it became the chief~~ made the
high light ~~of their~~ stories. ~~Moreover~~ And
~~these talk,~~ & talk is broken, hinting, inconclusive.
& talk varies, too, from a & is coloured by a

George Eliot
1819-1880

The granddaughter of a carpenter she was brought up among hills in & countryfolk
the country, & acquired culture; ~~laboriously~~ including
knowledge of ~~philol~~ philosophy & religion
but being ambitious laborious serious & inspired with a passion
for knowledge she ~~cant~~ absorbed all contemporary
~~cul~~ culture, surveyed thought, translated German
theology, ~~lived~~ helped to edit the Westminster
~~Review~~ & became the ~~companion~~ ~~friend~~ ambiguous of Spencer, & the
Companion of Lewes, ~~not his~~ ~~whose~~ wife during the lifetime of his wife,
a lunatic. On Her ~~novels~~. early novels ~~are realist~~. ~~her~~ later
the country prevail; in the later the philosopher. She
believed in the power of fiction to teach. She
mixed her fiction with brains: she was a ~~great~~ ~~gen~~
extended the bounds of the novel; she inspired the
warmest enthusiasm: she stretched her powers too far.
She was isolated, serious, cut off from life by
her ambiguous marriage: her later suffered:
But she stretched the limits of the novel. —
gave it a made it capacious, shapeless, &
taken ~~tract~~ statements of belief rather than stories.
Isolated & elevated, cut off from criticism —
from society; she lost in later life the
both charm & shape. But she stretched the
capacity of the novel, & if she left it
shapeless, filled the mature works of her
prime with richness & thought.

Combined rustic knowledge of people with an insatiable appetite for culture.

Rather late in life after translating German theology she turned to fiction; — Her first novels were rustic & reminiscent. Later, her culture ~~coloured~~ them; & made them ~~so~~

Unsettled by irregular alliance with Lewes.